

DETERMINISM IN THE
THEOLOGICAL SYSTEM OF JONATHAN EDWARDS

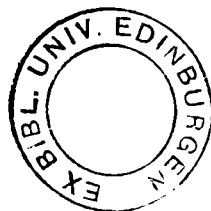
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A Thesis

Presented to the Faculty
of the University of Edinburgh
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

A. D. 1937



PREFACE

"No one who possesses any acquaintance with the history of the discussion of free-will", says N. P. Williams, "can be under the delusion that he has anything new to say on the subject."¹ If this is true, the student who attempts a doctor's thesis on the subject of theological determinism finds himself at the outset impaled upon the horns of a dilemma: he must admit either that he has nothing original to say or that he is poorly acquainted with his subject. The present candidate prefers to grasp the first horn,- to claim at least enough knowledge of the subject to agree in substance with Williams' statement. And yet, as Williams himself goes on to say, one can at least envisage the familiar arguments in the controversy from a fresh point of view.

It should be remarked also that one need not attack the problems of theological determinism with the feeling that one is foredoomed to failure on the ground of their insoluble character. The fact that controversy is still raging around the notions of freedom and necessity, in philosophy and science as well as in theology, has been too readily construed as indicating that the truth in the matter is unattain-

¹N. P. Williams, *The Ideas of the Fall and Original Sin*, p.446.

able. We need to remind ourselves that truth is not a question of popular agreement. To suppose that it is is to prepare one's self for the most thoroughgoing agnosticism, since no great theological or philosophical principle can command for itself universal support. We may, therefore, reply to the oft-repeated statement that the questions centering round freedom and necessity can never be solved, with the counter statement that they may have been already solved, that one side or the other may be essentially right.

Although it is not to the fore in contemporary discussion, the importance of the problem of determinism in theology can hardly be overstated. It is of primary significance in some of the salient doctrines of Christianity, and there is indeed no department of theology in which it does not have ramifications. Practically every Christian doctrine presupposes the truth either of the deterministic or non-deterministic position. The question is therefore eminently worthy of careful study by any one interested in theology.

An American student, reared in a Presbyterian Church which is still strongly Calvinistic, and interested in the deterministic problems of that system, quite naturally turns to Jonathan Edwards as a fruitful source of study. Edwards is commonly recognized as the "father of the New England Theology", the only real school of theology America has yet produced, and one in which the deterministic doctrines of Calvinism were the major desiderata.

Born at East Windsor, Connecticut, in 1703, and educated at Yale College, where he became for two years a tutor, Edwards accepted, in 1726, the pastorate of the Congregational Church at Northampton, Massachusetts. There he spent the next twenty-four years, leaving in 1750 as the result of differences with his congregation arising over the qualifications of communicants. The following year he went to Stockbridge, Massachusetts, as a missionary to the Indians, and while there produced his two most important deterministic works, the Enquiry into the Freedom of the Will, and the Treatise on Original Sin. His death occurred in 1757, just after his assumption of the presidency of Princeton College.

During his entire life, from about the age of thirteen, he was a prolific writer. Bulking large among his writings, and constituting, at least until recently, his chief grounds for fame, are his deterministic works, the titles of which can be found in the Bibliography. Of their influence Frank Hugh Foster remarks that "even in the person of its final and greatest representative, Professor Edwards A. Park, the New England Theology did not break loose from the substantial supra-lapsarianism in which Edwards had left it. Every great reasoner upon this theme believed himself to be in entire accord with Edwards. So profound was their admiration for their great leader that his successors scarcely conceived it possible that they should disagree with him, except in some small details of phraseology, or possibly, now and then, of thought."² The fact that, in the minds of certain contem-

²Frank Hugh Foster, A Genetic History of the New England Theology, p. 225.

porary writers, the deterministic works of Edwards have been eclipsed in interest and value by his philosophical and psychological treatises in no wise lessens the former's importance.

Apart altogether from those considerations which make Edwards of special interest to an American student, he is worth studying for the intrinsic merit of his thought. His genius has been recognized far and near. Sir James Mackintosh, in an oft-quoted statement, speaks of "his power of subtle argument, perhaps unmatched, certainly unsurpassed among men..."³ Dugald Stewart says: "There is, however, one metaphysician, of whom America has to boast, who, in logical acuteness and subtility, does not yield to any disputant bred in the universities of Europe. I need not say that I allude to Jonathan Edwards."⁴ The esteem in which Dr. Thomas Chalmers held him is well known: "There is no European divine to whom I make such frequent appeals; no book of human composition which I more strenuously recommend than his Treatise on the Will..."⁵ Professor A. M. Fairbairn gives the following estimate of Edwards: "He is not only the greatest of all the thinkers that America has produced, but also the highest speculative genius of the 18th century."⁶ To

³Sir James Mackintosh, Dissertation upon the Progress of Ethical Philosophy, p. 182.

⁴Dugald Stewart, quoted by Samuel Miller in "Life of Jonathan Edwards", in Jared Sparks' Library of American Biography, Vol. VIII, p. 183.

⁵Thomas Chalmers, quoted by A.V.G.Allen, in "Life and Writings of Jonathan Edwards", p. 285.

⁶A. M. Fairbairn, Jonathan Edwards, in The Prophets of the Christian Faith, p. 147.

quote, finally, a thoughtful and judicious statement by Paul Elmer More: "He had not the legal and/executive brain of Calvin, upon whose Institutes his scheme of theology is manifestly based, but in subtle resourcefulness of reasoning and still more in the scope of his spiritual psychology he stands above his predecessor."⁷

It would be easy to fill pages with further tributes to Edwards, but that is unnecessary,- that he is worthy of study cannot be denied. We might also add some of the criticisms he has drawn down upon himself, such, for instance, as Lecky's remark that his Treatise on Original Sin is "one of the most revolting books that has/ever proceeded from the pen of man."⁸ The criticisms, however, are directed against his views, - they do not deny his genius.

A thesis on the subject of determinism in Edwards is appropriate, not only because of the importance of Edwards' work, but also because, so far as the writer has been able to determine, there is no extant work covering precisely this ground. There are numerous works on his theory of the will, and other treatments of his theology as a whole, but none which stands between these two types, dealing with all the deterministic doctrines in his theology, yet limiting

⁷Paul Elmer More, "Edwards", in Cambridge History of American Literature, Vol. I. p. 71.

⁸W. E. H. Lecky, History of Rationalism in Europe, Vol. I, p. 404.

itself to them.

In our study of Edwards we shall deal with five doctrines: the decrees of God, the theory of the human will, original sin, efficacious grace, and the perseverance of believers. These five doctrines are all expressions of the deterministic principle. Others are influenced by this principle, but cannot properly be said to be aspects or expressions of it, and hence do not come within the limits of this dissertation. The doctrine of the limited atonement, one of the "Five Points" of Calvinism, is a direct outgrowth of Calvinistic determinism, but it is not itself a deterministic doctrine, and we shall therefore not deal with it here.

The exposition and criticism of the five doctrines listed will constitute the second and largest division of the thesis. It has seemed wise not to withhold the critical portion of the treatment until after the complete presentation of Edwards' thought, since this would lengthen the thesis by necessitating a restatement of many of his positions. As it is, they are usually criticized immediately after being presented, and thus while fresh in the memory. While this method has the virtue of shortening the thesis it has one disadvantage. The writer differs fundamentally from Edwards, with the result that most of the criticism is adverse. It may, therefore, sometimes appear that the interpretation is not as dispassionate and objective as a doctor's thesis demands. If there is any seeming bias or lack of detachment, we can only hope that it is merely apparent and

not real.

The thesis will contain two other major divisions. Part I will consist of a brief history of theological determinism, beginning with the Bible and leading up to the time of Edwards, and also a discussion of Edwards' sources. The chapter dealing with determinism in the Scripture will have the double purpose of seeking whatever light the Bible can throw upon our problems, and of rendering it for the most part unnecessary, when we come to examine Edwards' teaching, to go into the Biblical arguments in which he abounds. Many of his points are supported by pages of proof-texts, the discussion of which would fill volumes. It would, for this reason, be utterly impossible for us to undertake to deal with them. And it is likewise unnecessary, inasmuch as his way of using the Scripture belongs to a day that is past. As Charles R. Brown says: "His methods of Biblical interpretation as judged by the more competent scholarship of our day are hardly worthy of consideration or of respect."⁹

Part III will be given to a constructive statement on the problems studied in Edwards. In view of the fact that the critical portion is practically all included in Part II, this statement will be comparatively brief.

Three further things remain to be said. (1) There are some philosophical and psychological arguments relating to the freedom of the will with which we have not dealt. They

⁹Charles R. Brown, "Jonathan Edwards", in *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 14th edition, Vol. VIII, p. 20a.

have been omitted on the ground that in a theological treatise considerations which are primarily philosophical and psychological should be introduced only as they are involved in those which are moral and religious. (2) The thesis is written from the standpoint of Christian theism, the entire discussion taking place within the area of the theistic position. To go beyond these limits would be to open up avenues of discussion into which we have not entered and which would carry us too far afield. (3) We are assuming that the solution of the problems before us is not to be found in the affirmation of paradox as constituent of reality. To say that man's will is both free and determined, that God's will is both arbitrary and controlled by His holy character, or that in salvation God's grace does all and man, all, is simply to settle questions by denying their reality. When we rest content with the affirmation of contradictions, we abandon the search for truth.

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PART I

DETERMINISM BEFORE EDWARDS

CHAPTER I

THE TEACHING OF SCRIPTURE

We shall begin our study of theological determinism with the Bible. Edwards' extensive use of proof texts renders it highly worth while to preface our examination of his thought with a rapid survey of the Scriptural teaching at first-hand, and it is well in any case to have this in the background of our mind. We shall glance first at the doctrine of election in the Old Testament, then seek for any deterministic elements in the Gospels, and finally make a brief study of determinism in Paul.

I. Election in the Old Testament

In studying the determinism of the Old Testament we shall confine ourselves to the teaching of the great prophets, beginning with Amos, in the 8th century B. C., both because in them the thought of the Old Testament reaches its peak, and because in them "we escape from the mists of critical doubt into the daylight of acknowledged history."¹

It cannot be doubted that the conception of the

¹A. B. Bruce, *Apologetics*, pp 173-174.

election of Israel was one of the leading ideas of the prophetic mind. Amos, the first of the 8th century prophets writes: "You only have I known of all the families of the earth."² Hosea represents Jehovah as saying: "When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt."³ The First Isaiah speaks of Israel as the vineyard of Jehovah and represents Him as complaining at its unfruitfulness: "For the vineyard of Jehovah of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant: and he looked for justice, but, behold, oppression; for righteousness, but, behold, a cry."⁴ Micah reminds Israel of Jehovah's special guidance and protection in the past: "For I brought thee up out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed thee out of the house of bondage; and I sent before thee Moses, Aaron, and Miriam."⁵ The Second Isaiah gives strong expression to Jehovah's election of Israel and His purpose in so doing: "I, Jehovah, have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thy hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles."⁶

Two ideas stand out in these statements: (a) God has conferred upon Israel certain blessings, and (b) these have in turn imposed upon her certain obligations. She has been singled out among the nations of the earth to be made God's

²Amos iii. 2. (All Scripture quotations are from the Revised Version, American Edition.)

³Hosea xi, 1.

⁴Isaiah v. 7.

⁵Micah vi. 4.

⁶Isaiah xlii. 6.

peculiar people, the recipient of His special blessings. These blessings, however, are not mere ends in themselves,- they lay upon Israel the duty of making herself a blessing to others, and justify Jehovah in complaining at her for not realizing His expectations. Israel is indeed elected of Jehovah, yet elected not only to special favor, but also to special service.

The prophets' idea of the nature of Jehovah's special favors to His elect children is indicated at various points throughout their writings. They read the past history of their people in the light of the idea of election. Micah implies that Jehovah made a special covenant with the patriarchs promising them special blessings: "Thou wilt perform the truth to Jacob, and the lovingkindness to Abraham, which thou hast sworn unto our fathers from the days of old."⁷ Hosea indicates that Jehovah had a great part in the exodus from the land of Egypt: "Yet I am Jehovah thy God from the land of Egypt; and thou shalt know no god but me, and besides me there is no saviour."⁸ As we find in the Pentateuch, so we find in the prophets the notion that in Israel's beginning as a nation God was exercising a providential protection and directing influence, resulting in her consolidation and integrity as a nation and in her deepening insight, from Abraham through Moses, into the true religion. The question of the historicity of certain portions of the Pentateuch does not concern us here, since our interest is not primarily in the

⁷Micah vii. 20.

⁸Hosea xiii. 4.

fact of Israel's election, but in the Old Testament teaching concerning it. Jehovah's elective favor, according to the prophets, was still active in their day in the development of Israel's national and religious life.

It is a fact of great significance that the prophets did not teach the doctrine of the election of individuals to blessings in the world to come. The future life, in fact, had no prominence at all in their writings. The blessings of election were blessings for the nation as a whole, and for this world. This is true even in those prophecies which conceive the blessings as primarily spiritual in nature. The prophets' view of election is thus vastly different from the doctrine as it subsequently emerged in Calvinistic theology. It is not to be denied that Jeremiah and the Second Isaiah advanced in their religious insight to the conviction that the individual rather than the nation would be the unit with which Jehovah would thenceforth deal, but the blessings obedience would bring were promised for this life.

If such were the privileges to which Israel was elected, the general service required of her was that she should make herself a holy nation, and convey to other nations the knowledge of the true religion. We find in Exodus a very clear statement of Israel's vocation as given by Jehovah through Moses,- a statement which, as A. B. Bruce remarks, has a genuine prophetic ring, whatever the date of its writing. "Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be mine own possession from among all peoples: for all the earth is mine: and ye

shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation..."⁹

The service required is clearly indicated in Isaiah v. 7 and xlii. 6, quoted above. How far, and in exactly what ways, Israel carried out the service asked of her is beyond the scope of our present interest, the point of significance being that the Old Testament, as represented by the prophets, did distinctly teach an election to service as well as to privilege. And here again, just as we have seen in connection with the blessings promised, the service required was of the nation as a unit.

Such, in brief outline, is the Old Testament doctrine of election. The question now arises, Does this involve determinism? We have already seen that it does not involve a predetermination of individuals to eternal life, such as the doctrine of election later came to indicate. It is furthermore true that there is no conscious and explicit teaching of determinism by the prophets in connection with their doctrine of election to national privileges and to service in this world. There are some scattered statements which seem to suggest a determining influence of the divine, upon the human will, but these are more than counter-balanced by Jehovah's repeated warnings against falling away, His complaints over past failures, and the conditional character of the promises made,- all of which seem to imply man's possession of a power of contrary moral choice. If determinism is in the prophets' minds, it does not come to the fore.

⁹Exodus xix. 5,6.

The prophets believed God to be sovereign, but they also believed, so far as we can judge by what they actually taught, that man is free.

While the explicit teaching of the prophets leaves the question open, it may be argued that the principle of theological determinism nevertheless underlay their doctrine of election. This has been asserted, for instance, by Professor H. B. Smith, one of Edwards' successors in the line of New England theologians, who argues that a national election to privileges and service in this world is bound to imply an efficient action of God's Spirit on the individual. The national blessings designed by Jehovah for the Israelites were, it is held, contingent upon the conduct of certain leaders, such as the patriarchs, and Moses and David, and the conduct of these leaders at least must have been determined by Him. The religious blessings mediated by the prophets and others were even more dependent upon the lives of the mediators, and if Jehovah certainly intended that the blessings should come, the lives of these men must have been the result of His efficacious grace. In short, if Israel was elected to certain privileges, this presupposed the appropriate conduct, which must therefore have been foreordained. Again, the election of the nation to service implied, in the last analysis, the predestination of individuals to certain acts, otherwise the election was not certain.

In response to this argument it must be granted that such might be the implication of the doctrine of Israel's

election. One can certainly not defend the position that determinism is inconsistent with Old Testament teaching. On the other hand, it cannot be said that determinism is definitely implied in the prophetic doctrine of election any more than that it is explicitly taught. There are many things in the Old Testament, and particularly in the prophets, which indicate that Israel was free to obey or disobey Jehovah's leading. Jehovah is represented as complaining over her failures to do His will,- and there is no suggestion that these failures were expressive of His secret, as opposed to His revealed will. Further, it is entirely possible to believe, from a reading of the prophets, that Israel failed to receive all the blessings Jehovah had in store for her, or to render all the service He desired, although her gift of the prophets and of Christ to the world is sufficient to save the doctrine of election from being stultified. Again, Jehovah's promises and His calls to service are conditioned upon Israel's obedience, and there is no ground for arguing that this was not a genuine condition. All these things,- Jehovah's complaints, warnings, and conditional promises,- indicate on their face that Israel's election did not involve a foreordination of her conduct. They imply a conditional election, an election which is perfectly consistent with God's taking a gracious initiative toward His chosen people, without over-riding the freedom with which He had endowed them.

It is thus possible to regard the election taught in the Old Testament as either absolute or conditional, either

deterministic or non-deterministic, depending upon which set of statements it is from which we draw our inferences. Seekers of proof-texts on either side of the question can find all they wish. As we have observed, the prophets taught the sovereignty of God, the divine election, but apparently also the freedom of man. Whether, and how far, they appreciated the problem thus raised, we cannot say. It seems to have been either not recognized or wisely ignored.

II. Determinism in the Gospels

In the teaching of the Gospels the Old Testament theory of Israel's election fades into the background. Jesus is indeed represented, by Matthew particularly, as interested first in "the lost sheep of the house of Israel."¹⁰ But in His eyes the mere fact of being a Jew guaranteed no special favors from God. His attitude was trenchantly expressed by John the Baptist: "For I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham."¹¹ On two occasions Jesus explicitly states that the Jews have forfeited their special religious privileges. "And I say unto you, that many shall come from the east and the west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven: but the sons of the kingdom shall be cast forth into the outer darkness...."¹² The parable of the vineyard closes with this statement: "Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken away from you, and

¹⁰ Matthew ix. 6. ¹¹ Matthew iii. 9. ¹² Matthew viii. 11,12.

shall be given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof."¹³ This constitutes an unquestioned denial of the doctrine of unconditional national election.

In the teaching of Jesus the idea broached by Jeremiah and the Second Isaiah that the individual, rather than the nation, is the unit with which God deals, becomes prominent. Cognate with this change from the general teaching of the Old Testament is the further idea that the blessings promised refer not only to this world but to the next. Salvation consists in a fellowship with God which begins here, but which also continues to eternity.

This changed point of view determines our question as follows: Did Jesus teach an unconditional election to final salvation? The answer to this question is a most emphatic negative,- the whole tenor of Jesus' teaching indicates that anyone who wills may accept the gospel. The offer of salvation is universal. In the words of the Fourth Gospel: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life."¹⁴ Jesus never condemns anyone for conduct for which the individual was not responsible and could, therefore, presumably have avoided; nor does He make any unconditional promises of blessings. The general form of His promises and warnings is illustrated in these words to His disciples: "Every one therefore who shall confess me before men, him will I also confess before my Father who is in

¹³Matthew xxi. 43.

¹⁴John iii. 16.

heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father who is in heaven."¹⁵

It is of course possible to place a deterministic interpretation on the Gospels. The distinction between God's secret and revealed will can be used to account for the sincerity of Jesus' warnings, promises and exhortations. It can also be said that responsibility does not imply the power of alternative choice,- that if the conduct in question is the individual's own, and is performed without coercion, he is to be held accountable. It can be argued that while the individual may accept or reject the Gospel according as he wills, it is nevertheless determined what he shall will. Further, the promises can be construed as conditional in the sense that certain conduct is prerequisite to them, but as absolute from the point of view of God, who decrees according to His own good pleasure the line of conduct which the individual will follow. In this manner the determinist can always interpret any moral and religious experience in conformity with his deterministic pre-suppositions. It is nevertheless the case that Jesus' teaching, on the face of it, seems to assume the power of alternative choice in man.

There are, it is true, a few scattered remarks of Jesus which lend themselves more easily to a deterministic interpretation. For instance, there is the statement that "no one knoweth the Father except him to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal Him,"¹⁶ although in Matthew's account He

¹⁵Matthew x. 32,33.

¹⁶Matthew xi. 27; Luke x. 22.

goes on immediately to call unto Him all who labor and are heavy laden, giving an unconditional and unlimited invitation. Most of the deterministic passages are in the Fourth Gospel. We have, for instance, this statement: "For as the Father raiseth the dead and giveth them life, even so the Son also giveth life to whom he will."¹⁷ Here Jesus seems to attribute to Himself the power arbitrarily to determine whom He will save. It is significant, however, that three sentences below He makes a statement which seems to imply a universal offer of salvation: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth him that sent me, hath eternal life..."¹⁸ Elsewhere, Jesus says: "All that which the Father giveth me shall come unto me."¹⁹ And a moment later: "No man can come to me, except the Father that sent me draw him."²⁰ Both these statements might be used as an argument for the deterministic position, yet they certainly do not unambiguously imply it. The first does not necessarily indicate the election of a limited number, much less state it explicitly. The most that can be said is that it is not inconsistent with such a doctrine. All that the second states is the necessity of God's grace in anyone's turning to Christ. Man is unable alone to turn, but it is not stated that the Father withholds His needed assistance from any individual. In another place we have a clear statement of God's determining influence upon the unbeliever:

¹⁷ John v. 21.

¹⁸ John v. 24.
²⁰ John vi. 44.

¹⁹ John vi. 37.

"For this cause they could not believe, for that Isaiah said again, He hath blinded their eyes, and he hardened their heart; Lest they should see with their eyes, and perceive with their heart, And should turn, And I should heal them."²¹ Taken alone this is a very impressive expression of unconditional reprobation, but in the light of the rest of the Gospels its significance is greatly diminished.

It might be argued that Jesus' predictions in regard to Judas, Peter and others, indicate that all their actions were predetermined. But such an argument, of course, assumes the impossibility of His foreseeing free events, an assumption which is so thoroughly debatable that an argument based on it can have little force.

In addition to the fact that the deterministic implications of the statements we have quoted are uncertain, it must be borne in mind that such statements are extremely rare in the Gospels, in contrast to the large number of passages in which Jesus seems to recognize man's freedom. No one could possibly conclude from an impartial study of the Gospels that His teaching was definitely deterministic. Professor James Moffatt has well summed up for us what He actually did teach: "From an examination of the gospels we carry forward two conclusions about the mission and spirit of Jesus in what one writer called 'the days of his flesh': that the saving initiative is with God, and that no man must think of facing God on the basis of conscious merit."²²

²¹John xii. 39, 40.

²²James Moffatt, *Grace in the New Testament*, p. 94.

III. Determinism in Paul

In the writings of Paul the problem of theological determinism is more sharply defined than elsewhere in Scripture, and we find there a more definite teaching on the subject. There are relevant statements in many of his letters, but the most systematic and definite treatment is to be found in the Letter to the Roman Church, particularly in chapters ix - xi. We shall, therefore, use Romans as our primary source for the study of Paul's teaching, although we shall advert also to the other letters. Let us begin with a brief review of the argument in the chapters just mentioned.

1. The Argument of Romans ix -xi

In these chapters Paul takes up a problem which was very acute for him and for other Jewish Christians in the Apostolic Church, the problem raised by the fact that the Jews, who were God's elect people, had almost universally rejected Christ. The implication would seem to be either that God had turned His back on His elect people, denying them salvation, or that the gospel of salvation through Christ was false. Neither conclusion was possible for Paul. Accordingly he gives, summarily stated, the following answer to the difficulty: God is free to save whom He wills - the Jews as a nation have no special rights before God, no inalienable title to salvation (chapter ix); they are at present rejected by God because they have wilfully rejected the gospel (chapter x); but they eventually will enter the Messianic Kingdom by virtue of the fact that the incoming of

the Gentiles will provoke them to jealousy and thus lead them to accept Christ (chapter xi).

Chapter ix begins with a lament over the defection of Paul's Jewish brethren. Nevertheless, he goes on to say, it cannot be claimed that God has gone back on His promise to the Jews, because God has never said that all members of the Jewish nation are His people. "For they are not all Israel that are of Israel",²³ - not all the children of the patriarch are the children of God. Nor did the promise extend to all of Abraham's children, but only to Isaac's posterity. It is clear that "it is not the children of the flesh that are children of God; but the children of the promise are reckoned for a seed."²⁴ God has thus from the beginning been discriminating among the children of Abraham, and the fact that some Jews reject the gospel no more proves the promise to have failed than the fact that God chose Isaac and not Ishmael.

Paul does not stop with showing the fact of this discrimination, but goes into the deeper question of its basis. (verses 10-12) The ground of the distinction, he indicates, is perfectly clear in the case of Isaac's children. They were twins, yet even before their birth "neither having done anything good or bad",²⁵ God said to Rebecca that the elder should serve the younger. The distinction was due, therefore, to nothing in the individuals concerned,- obviously Paul is here thinking of Jacob and Esau as individuals,- but

²³Romans ix. 6.

²⁴Romans ix. 8.

²⁵Romans ix. 11.

to God's own sovereign freedom. It is a distinction not based on man's works but on God, who effectually calls men. It is the expression of "the purpose of God/according to election," ²⁶ a purpose which involves a choice. And as God sovereignly distinguished between Jacob and Esau, without reference to anything in them, so He may discriminate among the Jews, who are Jacob's descendants, without reference to their birth or merit.

In his attempt to exhibit God's independence in the bestowal of blessings, Paul thus goes the length of asserting an unconditional election. He now endeavors to meet an anticipated objection that this doctrine represents God as unjust. (vss 14-18) The objection he deals with by dismissing it as preposterous, quoting Jehovah's words to Moses in Exodus xxxiii. 19, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion," ²⁷ as a proof that God Himself asserts His bestowing of mercy to be determined by nothing outside of His own pleasure. "So then", he concludes, "it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that hath mercy." ²⁸ This is buttressed by a further quotation from Exodus ix. 16 where Jehovah is represented as saying that Pharaoh was raised up solely in order that God might show in him His power. God's sovereignty is thus illustrated, not only in the case of those who are freely elected, but also of those who do not and cannot receive mercy. The matter is then summed up in

²⁶ Romans ix. 11.

²⁷ Romans ix. 15.

²⁸ Romans ix. 16.

Paul's famous words: "So then he hath mercy on whom he will, and whom he will he hardeneth." ²⁹

A further difficulty still remains. If all human actions, the evil as well as the good, are referable to the sovereign will of God, how can God find fault with those who sin? "To this objection", remarks Dr. Denny, "there is really no answer, and it ought to be frankly admitted that the Apostle does not answer it." ³⁰ What Paul does is to deny man the right to raise such a question. The creature has no right to complain at the way the Creator has made him, just as the clay cannot urge any rights against the potter, who may use a lump of it for either noble or ignoble purposes. Whether or not this is an adequate answer to the question, it is important to observe that Paul has up to this point stated and defended God's sovereign right to bestow or withhold mercy without reference to any conditions in man. The bearing of this on the problem of the Jewish rejection of Christ is that the Jews can make no claim as of birth, or right, against God.

At this point Paul appears for the moment to recede from the absolutist position he has been taking, and to point out that God's dealing with men has been in accordance with their own desert, not merely with the inscrutable action of His own will. As a matter of fact, he says, although it is God's will to show His wrath, He has shown

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Romans ix. 18.

³⁰

James Denny, St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans, in the Expositor's Greek Testament, Vol. II, p. 663a.

great patience with sinners (i.e., "vessels of wrath"), giving them opportunity to repent. They cannot, therefore, find fault with Him. On the other hand, He makes known "the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He afore prepared unto glory," ³¹ and His favor is therefore unmerited. Those thus favored are Gentiles as well as Jews, a fact which accords with the declarations of Scripture in Hosea. Paul also quotes Isaiah to the effect that it is only the remnant of Israel that shall be saved. If, according to the Scripture, some Gentiles are to be called and not all the Jews, the latter can have no ground of complaint against God, and no right to plead birth as a title to His favor.

Beginning at chapter ix. 30 and continuing through chapter x, Paul gives another vindication of God's rejection of the Jews. Whereas he has emphasized God's sovereign freedom in the bestowal of His mercy, and the resultant lack of any claim upon His favor, as of right or merit, on the part of anyone, including the Jews, he now proceeds to show that it was in reality their own guilt which occasioned their rejection. Strange as it may seem, the Gentiles, who were not concerned to seek after righteousness, nevertheless found it, while the Jews, who strove after righteousness, did not attain it. The reason for this is that the Gentiles attained a righteousness through faith, the righteousness of God appropriated by faith, while the Jews, seeking the righteousness of the law through works, were aiming at the unattainable. "They stumbled at the stone of stumbling" ³² they

³¹Romans ix. 23.

³²Romans ix. 32.

they were offended at the cross because it summoned them to yield themselves to Christ with a sense of unworthiness.

The failure of the Jews was thus not due to lack of religious zeal, but to ignorance of the true way of salvation. "For being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God."³³ Paul then describes the two ways of law and faith more fully, using Old Testament illustrations, and points out that the way of faith is open to all. "But", he continues, "they did not all harken to the glad tidings."³⁴ Belief comes through hearing the Word, but no one could say that the Jews did not hear, - the gospel has been preached in all the world, as witness the statement in Psalm xix. 4. Nor could it be said that the Jews did not understand, for if, as Moses³⁵ and Isaiah³⁶ said, people beyond the covenant would respond to God's call, surely the Jews, with their vastly greater religious privileges, could not plead inability to grasp the meaning and truth of the gospel. Indeed the very calling of the Gentiles, as Moses suggests in Deuteronomy xxxii. 21, should have proved a message to Israel which they could not fail to apprehend, a message opening their eyes to the fact that they were forfeiting their position as God's chosen people. Paul concludes his indictment of the Jews with a quotation from Isaiah lxxv. 2: "But as to Israel he saith, All the day long

³³Romans x. 3.
³⁴Romans x. 16.

³⁵Deuteronomy xxxii. 21.
³⁶Isaiah lxxv. 1.

did I spread out my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people." ³⁷ Israel has persistently rejected the pleading love of God, as symbolized by His outstretched hands.

It is clear then that Israel's rejection is due to her wilful and unyielding refusal of the gospel, a refusal which cannot be excused on the ground of ignorance or lack of understanding. They were "ignorant of God's righteousness" ³⁸ in the final analysis, because of pride and stubbornness, and for this ignorance, therefore, they were in every sense culpable. The only ignorance which excuses unbelief is that of men who have never heard the gospel.

Paul's position in this chapter is clearly different from, and apparently inconsistent with, that of chapter ix. There the rejection of Israel was explained from God's standpoint alone and referred to His arbitrary election. Here the approach is from man's side, and the reason given for their exclusion is the Jews' deliberate rejection of the gospel, an act for which they must bear full responsibility.

The solution has now apparently been given to the question why God, being just and true to His promises, nevertheless rejected Israel. Paul, however, cannot let the discussion end on a note of hopelessness for the Jews. Hence he goes on in chapter x to point out that their defection is only a temporary phenomenon and one which eventually will bear good fruit. x 1

God has not cast off His people. As in the time of

³⁷Romans x. 21.

³⁸Romans x. 3.

Elijah there were seven thousand men who had not bowed the knee to Baal, so now there is a remnant which is true to the gospel. "Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace."³⁹ While most of the Jews have failed of the salvation they sought, those of the election have attained it through God's unmerited favor, and thus God has been true to His promises. Those who failed have been hardened,- just as God has hardened Israel in the past in judgment upon her sins. The hardening, Paul implies, is the result, not the cause of the sins.

Nevertheless, he continues, the stumbling of the Jews is not an irremediable fall. Rather, by their failure, salvation is coming to the Gentiles, a fact which will ultimately provoke the Jews to jealousy and bring them back into the fold. For this reason Paul desires faithfully to discharge his ministry to the Gentiles. Under the figure of the root and branches, he points out that God's choice of the patriarchs (the root) applies also to their descendants (the branches). The Gentiles are as wild olive branches grafted in among the natural ones through their faith. But just as God did not spare the natural branches, which were broken off by unbelief, so He will not spare the Gentiles, if they do not "continue in His goodness."⁴⁰ They should, therefore, be humble; and by the same token the Jews should take hope, for God, who grafted wild olive branches, contrary to nature, into a good tree, can certainly restore the natural

³⁹Romans xi. 5.

⁴⁰Romans xi. 22.

branches if He wills. The Jews, if they discontinue their unbelief, will certainly be reingrafted. Paul is obviously speaking, as he uses this figure, in terms of conditional election.

He concludes his discussion by asserting, as a mystery or revelation, the truth that Israel has been hardened only in part and until the Gentiles in their full strength have come into the Kingdom. "And so all Israel shall be saved."⁴¹ The meaning is that, as a result of the incoming of the Gentiles, which will provoke Israel to jealousy, the nation as a whole will attain salvation. (There is no reason for regarding 'all Israel' as referring to a group of elect Israelites as distinguished from those who were hardened. It means rather the historical people as distinct from the Gentile world.) The fact that all Israel will be saved is substantiated by a quotation from Isaiah lix. 20ff. The Jews in rejecting the gospel and thus opening the door to Gentiles are for this reason "enemies" of God, nevertheless "as touching the election they are beloved for the fathers' sake. For the gifts and calling of God are not repented of."⁴² God, having elected them, will not go back on His word. It is difficult of course to reconcile this with Paul's argument in chapter ix, to the effect that God had from the beginning distinguished between the children according to the flesh and those according to the spirit.

He concludes with the thought that when we look back

⁴¹Romans xi. 26.

⁴²Romans xi. 28,29.

on the whole development, we can see that (Romans xi. 29-32), just as the Gentiles were in the past disobedient and yet through the disobedience of the Jews have obtained mercy, so the Jews have become disobedient now in order that, through the mercy shown the Gentiles, they may (being provoked to jealousy) obtain mercy. The will of God controls all things, using even disobedience to further His purpose. His ultimate object is to show mercy upon all. "For God hath shut up all unto disobedience, that he might have mercy upon all." ⁴³

It is easy to read into these statements of Paul the idea of universal determinism, according to which God is directly responsible for all things, even sin. This, however, is not his meaning. Dr. Denny's interpretation is the true one: "It is within Paul's thought to say that the sin of Jews and Gentiles, to whom he preached the Gospel, did not lie outside the control, or outside the redeeming purpose, of God; but it does not seem to me to be within his thought to say that God ordains sin in general for the sake of, or with a view to, redemption. This is a fancy question which an apostle would hardly discuss. God subordinates sin to His purpose, but it is not a subordinate element in His purpose." ⁴⁴ Nor have we any right to conclude that Paul is here teaching the doctrine of universal salvation. The im-

⁴³Romans xi. 32.

e/ ⁴⁴James Denny, St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans, Expositor's Greek Testament, p. 685b.

mediate and concrete problem before his mind is the future of the Jews, and to draw from his prediction of their eventual salvation as a nation the inference that all men shall eventually receive mercy is to father upon himan idea which is as remote from his mind in this particular instance as it is from his eschatology in general.

2. Paul and the Doctrine of Election

There can be no doubt that in the chapters just examined Paul teaches a doctrine of election. It is taught clearly in chapter ix, which emphasizes God's selective activity toward the Jews of old, based upon His freedom to show mercy where He wills; and we find it also in chapter xi, where Paul indicates his assurance that the Jews, being chosen of God, will finally be saved. The difficulty in reconciling completely chapters ix and xi is no argument against the fact that Paul believed in a sovereign election. Not only did he teach election, but also election to final salvation. It is true that the illustrations drawn from the patriarchs and Pharaoh do not refer to final salvation, but the core of Paul's problem is the relation of the Jews to Christ, and for him that involved the question of their eternal destiny. When, in Romans xi. 26, he asserts that "all Israel shall be saved", the reference is unquestionably to salvation in the life to come.

This teaching can also be found elsewhere in Paul's writings. In Romans viii. 29,30 we have a statement which cannot be twisted to mean anything else but an individual

election to final salvation. "For whom he foreknew, he also foreordained to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren: and whom he foreordained, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified." ⁴⁵

At the beginning of the Letter to the Ephesians there is an explicit assertion of God's foreordination of some to eternal life. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places/in Christ: even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blemish before him in love: having foreordained us unto adoption as sons through Jesus Christ unto himself, according to the good pleasure of his will..." ⁴⁶ In I Thessalonians i. 4 Paul speaks of knowing the election of his brethren, and ⁱⁿ II Thessalonians he gives thanks "for that God chose you from the beginning unto salvation in sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth." ⁴⁷ It is not necessary to cite further instances to prove that he taught the doctrine of election.

Election for Paul, however, did not involve a decree of reprobation. The hardening spoken of in the chapters we have examined is not a hardening which brings everlasting punishment in its train. In Pharaoh's case, for instance, it has reference to a specific historical situation, and certainly bears only indirectly, if at all, on his eternal

⁴⁵Romans viii. 29,30.

⁴⁶Ephesians i. 3-5.

⁴⁷II Thessalonians ii.13.

destiny. The hardening of the Jews Paul specifically states to be partial and temporary. The "vessels of wrath fitted unto destruction" are mentioned as objects of God's patience, and there is no implication that they became "vessels of wrath" through an immutable decree. Nowhere in his writings does Paul represent God as unconditionally foreordaining any to destruction.

On the contrary there is good ground for believing that Paul taught it to be God's will that all should be saved. "For God hath shut up all unto disobedience, that he might have mercy upon all." ⁴⁸ Professor Moffatt says: "His real concern in this argument for God as absolutely unbound is to magnify His grace." ⁴⁹ In I Timothy ii. 3,4, he says: "This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; who would have all men to be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth." Another statement to the same effect is to be found in Titus ii. 11: "For the grace of God hath appeared, bringing salvation to all men",- more accurately, "hath appeared to all men, bringing salvation." In the well known passage, Romans v. 12-21, Paul makes it clear that God's grace in Christ is as wide in extent and even greater in power than the sin and death which came through Adam,- "but where sin abounded grace did abound more exceedingly." ⁵⁰ To say, on the basis of texts such as these, that Paul taught universal salvation would be to go

⁴⁸Romans xi. 32.

⁴⁹James Moffatt, Grace in the New Testament, pp 263-264.

⁵⁰Romans v. 20.

too far and to ignore passages which speak of God's severity toward those who reject the gospel. But they do indicate that the saving of all men would be in accordance with God's will.

It is certainly true that he did not teach a double predestination, according to which some are unconditionally sent to perdition. A decree of reprobation is a logical implication of the doctrine of unconditional election; the fact that Paul did not definitely teach it may simply mean that he did not care to push his logic to that extreme. Or it may mean that he did not hold, as a fixed conviction, the doctrine as it subsequently appeared in Calvinistic theology.

This last thought raises the question of how far Paul went in his doctrine of an arbitrary, elective activity on the part of God. We have seen that in Romans ix he does ascribe such activity to God, instancing His discrimination between Jacob and Esau. The idea of unconditional election also apparently underlies the assertion at the end of chapter xi that all the Jews shall be saved. In addition he elsewhere gives strong emphasis to God's sovereignty. The other point of view, however, is equally, or more prominent. As we have seen, in Romans x, Paul does full justice to the fact that the Jews have been rejected on account of wilful disobedience. Their own conduct was the condition of God's withholding His blessings from them: for that conduct they were responsible, and in it, therefore, presumably free. Again, in the discussion of Jewish and Gentile relations to Christ, under the figure of the tree and branches, it is

specifically stated that the Gentiles' remaining ingrafted and the Jews' being reingrafted depends upon their conduct. Thus even in Romans ix-xi, where his doctrine of election is stated at greatest length and with most clarity, there are elements which indicate that Paul had in mind a conditional election, and recognized the reality of human freedom. Elsewhere also there are statements which show that he did not hold exclusively to an absolutist theory of God. In II Corinthians vi. 1, for instance, he cautions against receiving the grace of God in vain, clearly indicating the possibility of this, a possibility implying man's freedom to resist God's grace and thwart His will. In Philippians ii. 12,13 he speaks at the same time of man's and of God's part in salvation. In verse 12 he says to the Philippians, "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling", clearly implying that they were active in the process of receiving grace, and that they should fear lest a failure to fulfil the requirements might jeopardize their standing with God. Yet in verse 13 he reminds them that "it is God who worketh in you both to will and to work, for His good pleasure." Here we have strongly illustrated the apparent fact that God's initiative and energy did not mean for Paul that man's free cooperation is unessential to his salvation.

Paul's assertions of an arbitrary sovereignty in God and a genuine responsibility, apparently implying freedom, in man constitute an unresolved antinomy. With the solution of this antinomy he is not concerned, and how far he is conscious of it we do not know. He never goes into the fine

points of the relation of the divine, and the human will. His undivided support cannot be claimed either for unconditional election or for the doctrine of conditional election and human freedom. Having recognized this much, however, it should be pointed out that a doctrine of unconditional election is not essential in Paul's theology. It is not laid down as a fundamental principle, as it is in Calvin's system, nor is it a necessary inference from anything he taught. Conditional election, involving the recognition of a power of contrary choice in man, is at least as harmonious with his theology as a whole as is unconditional election, if indeed not more so. He was impressed above all with the fact that salvation is not due to human merit but to God's mercy, and his belief in election sprang, not from an abstract notion of God as omnipotent will, but from the experience of unmerited divine grace. Professor Moffatt has well stated Paul's view: "Predestination, leading out into election, means that the good man must ever remember that no good actions of his will avail to save him, apart from the Will of God. It is a statement of the content of the grace-experience."⁵¹ And just prior to this he remarks: "In his view God, to be gracious, must be absolutely free to choose the method of His giving and the objects of His boon. The one determining motive must be in Himself."⁵² Now a man may still be free to respond or not

⁵¹James Moffatt, *Grace in the New Testament*, p. 255.

⁵²*ibid*, p. 254.

to the divine grace without robbing God of His saving initiative in salvation, His freedom to determine the conditions in man requisite to salvation, or His independence of any constraint due to human merit,- none of these factors is inconsistent with a capacity in man to exercise faith or not as he chooses. When, therefore, Paul goes the length of asserting an arbitrary sovereignty which overrides man's freedom, as he does in Romans ix, he is moving beyond anything required by his doctrine of salvation by grace. The statements in which he recognizes man's responsibility and freedom to exercise faith seem to be more in keeping with his general teaching as to the process of salvation.

3. Grace and Perseverance in Paul

Two further questions are involved in what we have been discussing: (a) Did Paul teach a theory of irresistible grace? and (b) Did he teach the final perseverance of all Christians? These doctrines hang together with, and indeed are implied by, that of unconditional election, and the answer to the questions just asked must be the same as we have given in regard to Paul's doctrine of unconditional election. Certainly he did not teach irresistible grace and final perseverance in an explicit form, and if some of his language seems to imply the one or the other, we must remember also the statements which indicate man's freedom to respond or not to God's grace, and the possibility of his defection after he has responded. For instance, if Romans viii. 29,30 seems to express a predestination involving the

exercise of efficacious grace, there is the tenth chapter also to consider, in which the Jews are unquestionably portrayed as wilfully rejecting God's grace. Again, if, in II Thessalonians ii. 13 and 14, the certain perseverance of the Thessalonian Christians is indicated, a perseverance based on the fact that "God chose (them) from the beginning unto salvation" and "called (them) through our gospel", there is also the exhortation in the next verse which implies the possibility of failure on their part: "So then, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye were taught..." We have already noted the warning given the Gentiles in Romans xi. 20,21 against a possible falling away. It is thus, to say the least, impossible to claim Paul's authority unconditionally for the doctrine of efficacious grace and certain perseverance.

4. Paul's Teaching on Original Sin

What Paul has to say on the subject of original sin is concentrated almost entirely in the passage, Romans v. 12-21, and there occurs, not as the primary subject of discussion, but as a series of remarks illustrating the nature and extent of Christ's grace.

The first three verses of this passage really contain the substance of his position: Christ's atonement has a far-reaching effect on the world, just as Adam's fall did. The significance of his fall is well known,- "as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin; and so death passed unto all men, for that all sinned:-" ⁵³ The

⁵³Romans v. 12.

sentence is broken here, but there are two important ideas in this verse. (a) Through Adam's fall sin as an active principle first gained an entrance into the human race. Without saying just how or why, Paul seems to mean that, as a result of Adam's sin, all men are born with the liability to sin. (b) Adam's fall brought with it death as the punishment of sin. Sanday⁵⁴ interprets this as primarily physical death. Through Adam's fall death came upon all his descendants, because they all sinned, as he had sinned, and died, as he had died. There is nothing in verse 12 to justify the reading, "because all sinned in him." Denny⁵⁵ says the aorist should be translated here, "have sinned", and that the idea of the sin's being in Adam is an importation from beyond the context. Paul goes on to point out that even those in the pre-Mosaic period, who did not sin "after the likeness of Adam's transgression",⁵⁶ i.e., against an express command, and therefore not in the strict sense of full responsibility,- even those suffered death as the penalty of sin. This must have been due to the fact that it was a penalty transmitted from Adam.

The explanation that death came upon all men because all sinned implies that, whatever may have been the effects of Adam's fall, men are individually responsible for the sins they commit. Adam's sin may have connected sin and

⁵⁴William Sanday, The Epistle to the Romans (in International Critical Commentary), p. 132ff.

⁵⁵James Denny, op. cit., p. 627b.

⁵⁶Romans v. 14.

death inseparably, but only the individual's sin brings death upon him.

The remainder of the passage,- verses 15-21,- contains a number of statements which deal with the effect of the fall on Adam's descendants: "By the trespass of the one the many died",⁵⁷ "the judgment came of one unto condemnation",⁵⁸ "by the trespass of the one, death reigned through the one",⁵⁹ "through one trespass the judgment came unto all men to condemnation",⁶⁰ "through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners."⁶¹ There is nothing in these statements, however, to add any new idea to what has been said in verses 12-14, although the repetition of the ideas serves to emphasize their hold on Paul's thinking.

With this sketch of Paul's doctrine of original sin before us, we can observe significant differences between him and the doctrine as later developed. To begin with, he knows nothing of "original righteousness." This is a conception entirely foreign to his thought. Nor can it be claimed that he taught the doctrine of "original guilt." James Candlish, defending the doctrine, remarks in connection with Paul's view: "By guilt in this connection must be understood, not moral culpability (culpa), but legal responsibility (reatus), or liability to punishment."⁶² Candlish is undoubtedly right in the position that Paul did not teach our moral culpability for Adam's sin. Unless we actually

⁵⁷Romans v. 15. ⁵⁸Romans v. 16. ⁵⁹Romans v. 17. ⁶⁰Romans v.18.
⁶¹Romans v. 19. ⁶²James Candlish, The Biblical Doctrine of Sin, p. 116.

sinned in Adam, we cannot be held morally blameworthy for his sin, and, as we have seen, Paul did not say that we participated in his sin. But furthermore, he did not teach either that we are legally responsible for Adam's sin, as we have already seen. It is in keeping with Paul to say that sin is punishable ^{by} death on account of Adam's fall, but not that we are liable to death on the same account, apart from our individual sins.

The theory of original sin in the stricter sense of a transmitted propensity to evil does find some support in Paul. He does teach that "through one man's disobedience the many were made sinners." ⁶³ But, to quote Candlish again: "It should be remembered that the term imputation, as applied to the relation of Adam's sin to mankind, is only an inference from, and not an express statement of, Scripture; and, therefore, the authority of God's word can only be pleaded for the general statement that by the offence of the one the many were made sinners, and not for the particular notions that may be conceived to be implied in imputation." ⁶⁴ Through Adam, in some way, a tendency to sin was transmitted to his descendants, - in other words, there is a moral solidarity in the race. But on the all-important question whether this was a determining tendency, guaranteeing that each descendant would sin, Paul is silent. And there is no reason for assuming that he must be necessarily interpreted as holding to such a tendency. On the other

⁶³ut supra.

⁶⁴James Candlish, op. cit., pp 114-115.

hand, we know Paul regarded us as responsible for our sins as they are committed, a fact which, for the average man, implies that the sins are freely committed. What Paul actually taught is simply the generally recognized fact of an inherited tendency to sin.

We might add that in refusing to go further than this Paul is not untrue to Genesis.⁶⁵ There is no assertion in Genesis iii that the sin of Adam and Eve occasioned any corruption or dislocation of human nature. Nor is the idea there to be found that God withdrew certain divine gifts, possessed by man before the fall, which might have enabled him to remain innocent. Again, the Genesis account does not indicate that Adam's posterity was involved in the consequences of his sin beyond the fact of exclusion from the garden and the tree of life, and the liability to the ordinary physical ills of life. Nor can we detect in the Jahvist compiler's mind any conception of original sin. Later sins, such for instance as Cain's, are not represented as connected with Adam's. Full responsibility is attributed to the generations following Adam, and when, in the Jahvist history, their corruption finally evoked the flood, there is no suggestion that the sin of the first parent was in any way the cause of it. It might be pointed out in conclusion that the other books of the Old Testament give no place to the idea of a connection of Adam's sin and the general sinfulness of mankind.

⁶⁵See E. R. Tennant, Article, Original Sin, Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics, p. 1558b.

IV. Concluding Remarks

From this brief study of Scripture, as it bears on the problem of theological determinism, it is clear that the Bible cannot be cited as conclusive evidence either for or against the deterministic position. The special pleader can find a plethora of material for his purpose; Edwards' works abound in proof-texts which apparently indicate that the Five Points of Calvinism are definitely taught in Scripture. A similar array of counter proof-texts can be found in Arminian writers. This possibility of drawing from Scripture statements on both sides of the controversy is due in part to the fact that the Scripture contains some unresolved antinomies, as we have seen, for instance, in Romans ix-xi. But it is due in far greater degree to the apologetical fervor in both camps, which reads into Biblical statements far reaching implications that were not present to the authors' minds. The fine points of the deterministic problem were not entered into, and probably not fully grasped, by the Biblical writers. The only place in which the fundamental ethical problem is squarely faced is the ninth chapter of Romans, where Paul's extreme statement of the divine elective activity brings to his mind the implications of an arbitrary election for the character of God and the moral agency of man. The difficulties raised are quickly dropped and left unsolved. Elsewhere the inferences which can be read into statements bearing on the general question of determinism are not to be thought of as intended by their authors. For the solution of the problems we shall raise

in this thesis we must, on the whole, go beyond Scripture, although we should not run counter to its general teaching. The all-important question of the psychology of volition, for instance, receives no treatment in Scripture, as is the case with certain problems relating to the origin and propagation of sin, and with other questions we shall face. The writers of the Bible were writing for the people, and with a practical purpose. The question of theological determinism, on the other hand, is a speculative problem. We should therefore not be surprised that it is not exhaustively dealt with in Scripture.

There are certain fundamental truths, bearing on our problem, which all will probably agree are taught clearly in Scripture: (a) God's power is unlimited. (b) His character is without blemish, and His dealings with men are governed by justice and mercy. (c) Man is responsible for his attitude toward the gospel. (d) There is a racial solidarity in sin, - our sin is somehow connected with Adam's. (e) Grace is wholly unmerited, and the saving initiative is always with God. Any theory which would be Scriptural must be in conformity with these truths, but it is certain that they do not indicate on their face exactly what the true theory must be.

CHAPTER II

DETERMINISM FROM AUGUSTINE TO THE WESTMINSTER CONFESSION

We shall now briefly review the development of determinism in Christian theology between the time of Paul and that of Edwards. Among the ancient fathers the most masterful proponent of this type of thought was Augustine. Somewhat indeterministic in his earlier Christian writings, he later moved to a position of the strictest determinism, the influence of which is still felt in the Christian Church. We shall begin our survey, therefore, with a cursory statement of his major deterministic doctrines.

I. Augustine

1. The Decrees of God

Augustine taught that God's plan is universal,- that His purpose and will are completely carried out, the goal aimed at in creation being attained to its last detail. He did not deny that the will of the creature sometimes opposes God's will, and the consequent existence of sin, but he insisted that, when sin exists, God permits it and wills to permit it. This permission is justified by the fact that He actually accomplishes some of His purposes through the evil desires of wicked men, using their very opposition to carry

out His will. Thus sin is really turned into good, and that which appears evil, when taken by itself, is good when viewed in relation to the whole. Augustine even says that it is good that evil exists.

As a corollary of this idea of God's universal plan, Augustine held to a doctrine of absolute predestination. The elect are elected not only to future blessings, but also to be the recipients of faith as the result of divine grace. Hence faith itself is just as much God's gift as the blessings which follow upon the exercise of it. The number of the elect is unchangeably fixed, and is the same as the number of fallen angels, in order that the loss incurred by their defection may be made up. On the other hand, all the non-elect are left in sin,- left to perish. Thus Augustine taught a double predestination, i.e., a predestination of some to salvation and others to damnation. The damned, however, are not predestined to sin, - and this is important, - but only to the punishment which sin deserves.

This discrimination between the elect and the damned does not cast a shadow on God's justice, said Augustine, for the reason that all are guilty and deserve damnation. If any are spared, they have cause to rejoice, but none have cause to complain.

2. The Human Will

Augustine's controversy with Pelagius brought forth his doctrine of human freedom in its mature form. Quite naturally, with his conception of God's sovereignty, he

would not entirely agree with Pelagius that man possesses the power of contrary choice. He did, as a matter of fact, attribute this power to Adam before the fall, and he did not deny it entirely to Adam's posterity. Man, he held, has the power of alternate choice in civil or worldly concerns, and he even went so far, in his De Civitate Dei, as to concede that man might by the exercise of free will live righteously and grow in virtue. But to choose God and to live for Him over against oneself, the supreme thing, man is utterly incapable of doing without divine help. And if he does not live for God, all his deeds, even the high and noble ones in the sight of men, are in reality evil. Thus despite his concessions, Augustine leaves man's will enslaved to the lower elements in his nature, so far as the most significant matter in his life is concerned. Here, he possesses no freedom in any sense of the term.

To Augustine freedom|consists in one's choices being determined by the higher elements in one's nature. Negatively put, it is freedom from subjection to the lower propensities. To use his own words: "For it was expedient that man should be at first so made as to be able to will both good and evil, not without reward if he willed good nor without punishment if he willed evil. But in the future life it will not be in his power to will evil. However, he will not therefore be deprived of free will. On the contrary his will will be all the freer when it cannot become the slave

of sin."¹ Freedom is thus not the power of contrary choice, but a particular form of necessity, to Augustine indeed a blessed necessity. In his fallen state, of course, man possesses, so far as his religious life is concerned, neither freedom in this form nor in any other.

3. Original Sin

Man in his unregenerate state is the creature of the lower propensities in his nature. Without God's indwelling, determining grace, he is impotent to exhibit any real goodness. This is a cardinal feature of Augustine's theology. The "mass of perdition" which is man in his present state stands in tragic contrast with the "original righteousness" of Adam and Eve before the fall. They were then in a state of perfect holiness and unbroken communion with God. And it should be noted that as a part of the blessedness of this state they enjoyed the power of contrary choice in the realm of their religious life.

We have seen why, according to Augustine, God permits this sinfulness in man, but it remains to be asked what he held to be the cause of sin. To account for its appearance, and also for natural evil, in a world created out of nothing by a God who is both good and powerful, he made use of the Neo Platonic conception that evil is mere negation, the loss or diminution of being. The cause of evil is the tendency in all created beings to lapse again into the nothingness

¹Augustine, Enchiridion, quoted by A.C. McGiffert, A History of Christian Thought, Vol. II, p. 97.

from whence they came, plus the absence of the divine power, which alone can sustain them in being. This tendency to sink into nothing reveals itself in man's choice of the less instead of the greater, of self instead of God, which is the essence of all sin. Thus the absence of divine grace is the occasion, but God is not the cause of sin.

With this theory of evil, Augustine did not need the fall of Adam to account for the universal sinfulness of the human race. Men are bound to sin, if left to themselves, apart from any act of Adam's. In spite of this, however, under the influence of the Catholic tradition, he accepted the doctrine that the fall accounts for the sins of Adam's descendants. As to Adam's own sin, he was true to his general theory of evil. This sin was not due to Adam's fleshly nature, which was good, but to his tendency to lapse into nothing, to turn from God, the greater good, to self, the lesser good, an act which was pride in its worst form. While this is in keeping with Augustine's general doctrine of the cause of evil, the connecting of Adam's sin with his posterity's was really inconsistent with it. Nevertheless he laid great emphasis upon the connection. According to him, human nature as a whole was somehow deposited in the first man. He expressed this idea of the race's solidarity sometimes in terms of Origen's conception of seminal existence in the first parent, and sometimes in terms of the realistic notion of the participation of Adam's posterity, not only in his nature, but also in his personality. Human nature as it came from God was pure, and included the capacity for alter-

nate^{ne} choice. Through the exercise of this latter capacity Adam fell into sin, and human nature, existing in its totality in him, was completely corrupted in this first act of transgression, and as such is transmitted to Adam's descendants. This transmission takes place through concupiscence, by which Augustine means primarily the sexual appetite, which is itself the fruit of Adam's first sin, as well as the means whereby sinful nature is communicated from father to son.

Not only were we corrupted in Adam, but we are guilty for the evil nature we inherit, and even for the first sin by which it was produced. This sin was truly the common act of mankind in their moral oneness. All, therefore, are responsible for its consequences, and thus share in both the corruption and the guilt of the first sin. The idea of our participation in Adam's sin is fundamental with Augustine, and forms the bulwark of his defense against Pelagian attacks upon the apparent injustice of our suffering and being condemned for what we could not prevent. The fact that Augustine was a convinced Creationist did not prevent his espousing this view of our relation to Adam, although it was only with a great struggle that he could reconcile the two positions.

4. Grace

From his state of depravity man can be rescued only by the grace of God. The experience of God's unmerited grace was the core of Augustine's religious consciousness,

and the prime motive back of his determinism. To him this grace consists both in external inducements and in the presence of divine power in man's own heart. By this inward power from God, sometimes thought of as the Indwelling Spirit and sometimes in impersonal terms, man's will is not only enabled to rise above his lower nature and believe, but is indeed effectually determined so to do. God bestows His grace freely and quite without regard to human merit. "He goes before the unwilling that He may will; He follows the willing that he may not will in vain."² God's grace is irresistible,- He can do with the wills of men what He wills, and when He wills.

The basis of this conception is the notion of God as absolute or almighty will, a notion altogether different from the idea of God as the sole source of good. Augustine did not, however, like his disciple Zwingli, draw the conclusion that finite creatures have no wills of their own. God is absolute will in the sense of an all-controlling, rather than an all-embracing will.

5. Final Perseverance

While the number of the elect is fixed, it is not identical with the number of believers. Perseverance, like faith, is the gift of God, but it is a distinct gift. It is bestowed only on those believers upon whom God, in His inscrutable wisdom, elects to bestow it. On this point

²Augustine, op. cit., p. 93.

Augustine is at variance with his disciples among the Reformers, whose interest in the assurance of salvation led them to identify all true believers with the elect.

II. John Calvin

Augustine died in the year 430. The strength and permanence of his influence is strikingly illustrated in the works of his great disciple, John Calvin, who was born in 1509. In him we find a form of theological determinism both more systematic and, in some points, more thoroughgoing than Augustine's. While there was nothing really new in Calvin's teaching, he did give a new emphasis to the doctrine of divine sovereignty, as expressed in the decree of predestination.

1. The Decrees of God

Calvin places in the forefront of his system a sovereign God and His universal control through His decrees. Back of this emphasis lay a religious experience corresponding essentially to that of Luther. Distress of conscience and a sense of helplessness had been followed by an inner peace and assurance, through trust in the wholly undeserved grace of the Gospel. Reflection upon his experience impressed Calvin not only with the freedom, the unmerited character of grace, but also with what seemed to him the correlative fact of God's absolute sovereignty in the bestowal of grace. Grace would not be grace, he felt, unless God were absolutely sovereign, that is, above all condition-

ing factors ~~in~~ dealing with His creatures. This primary emphasis on the doctrine of sovereignty, and the use made of it, is one of the fundamental differences between Calvinism and the Lutheran system, in which unconditional election increasingly slipped into the background.

The sovereignty of God finds its expression in the decree of predestination. This decree Calvin makes the very core of his system. In distinction from Luther, he includes in it the decree of reprobation. God, he held, has determined the destiny of every individual, electing some to eternal life and some to damnation. "Predestination we call the eternal decree of God, by which he has determined in himself, what he would have to become of every individual of mankind. For they are not all created with a similar destiny; but eternal life is foreordained for some, and eternal damnation for others. Every man, therefore, being created for one or the other of these ends, we say, he is predestinated either to life or to death."³

The basis of this distinction between the elect and the damned, according to the Institutes, lies solely in God's will. If it were due to anything else, said Calvin, God would not be sovereign. There can be no cause, even in God Himself, of the actions of His will. "For if it has any cause, then there must be something antecedent, on which it depends; which it is impious to suppose. For the will of God is the highest rule of justice; so that what he wills

³ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Vol. III Bk. III, p. 145.

must be considered just, for this very reason, because he wills it. When it is inquired, therefore, why the Lord did so, the answer must be, Because he would."⁴ Calvin's method with cavers who raise questions as to the justice of God's arbitrary discrimination between men is to remind them that to inquire into the reasons of the divine will is the height of presumption. "Foolish mortals enter into many contentions with God, as though they could arraign him to plead to their accusations. In the first place they inquire, by what right the Lord is angry with his creatures who had not provoked him by any previous offence; for that to devote to destruction whom he pleases, is more like the caprice of a tyrant than the lawful sentence of a judge; that men have reason, therefore, to expostulate with God, if they are predestinated to eternal death without any demerit of their own, merely by his sovereign will. If such thoughts ever enter the minds of pious men, they will be sufficiently enabled to break their violence by this one consideration, how exceedingly presumptuous it is only to inquire into the causes of the Divine will; which is in fact, and is justly entitled to be, the cause of every thing that exists."⁵

In The Agreement with the Genevese Pastors Calvin takes a different position, asserting that there is a good and sufficient reason for every decree of the Almighty, however mysterious it might seem to us. This is to base God's will upon the right rather than the right upon the divine will.

⁴John Calvin, op.cit., p. 165. ⁵ibid, p. 165.

Which of these clearly inconsistent positions he really held is uncertain, although it must be said that that of the Institutes is more in harmony with his general/theological system, and was written in a more dispassionate mood, free from the pressure of debate.

Calvin's doctrine of the divine decrees raises the question of God's relation to sin. That God could have kept sin out of the world he regards as certain. "Wherefore let us not hesitate to say with Augustine, 'God could convert to good the will of the wicked, because he is omnipotent. It is evident that he could. Why, then, does he not? Because he would not. Why he would not, remains with himself.'" ⁶ Is sin then directly produced by God, or is it only permitted? The absolute sovereignty of God, as Calvin conceives it, seems to imply that God is the efficient cause of sin. Similarly, the doctrine of reprobation as stated in the Institutes seems to be clearly of such a nature as to involve a direct decree of sin. And in the Institutes Calvin himself avows this conclusion. "Nor should it be thought absurd to affirm, that God not only foresaw the fall of the first man, and the ruin of his posterity in him, but also arranged all by the determination of his own will." ⁷ Here again The Agreement with the Genevese Pastors is milder, for it declares that the decree regarding sin is a permissive one. The doctrine of the Institutes, however, is more logically akin to Calvin's system as a whole and probably repre-

⁶ John Calvin, op.cit., p. 192. ⁷ ibid, p. 170.

sents his deepest conviction.

Whatever be his true position as to God's part in its production, it is certain that Calvin felt the existence of sin could be justified. Despite God's commandments against it, its presence in the world is certainly in accord with His inscrutable, decretive will. This being Calvin's conviction, he reproduced the doctrine of Augustine in regard to the problem of evil: sin is evil, but because it exists in a world controlled by God, it must be good that it exists.

2. The Human Will

In asking whether Calvin attributed freedom to man we must first ascertain what he meant by freedom. He rejects as absurd the view of a number of the Fathers whom he quotes as identifying it with freedom from coercion, from physical or external necessity. If this is freedom, he concludes, "...man will be said to possess free will in this sense, not that he has an equally free election of good and evil, but because he does evil voluntarily, and not by constraint. That, indeed, is very true; but what end could it answer to decorate a thing so diminutive with a title so superb? Egregious liberty indeed, if man be not compelled to serve sin, but yet is such a willing slave, that his will is held in bondage by the fetters of sin. I really abominate contentions about words, which disturb the Church without producing any good effect; but I think that we ought religiously to avoid words which signify any absurdity, particularly when they lead to a pernicious error. How few are there,

pray, who, when they hear free will attributed to man, do not immediately conceive, that he has the sovereignty over his own mind and will, and is able by his innate power to incline himself to whatever he pleases?"⁸ This involves a thoroughgoing rejection of the position that freedom is synonymous with independence of external constraint, even though the will may be determined by good or evil motives. It thus involves a divergence from Augustine's idea that it consists in the control of the will by the higher nature. God Himself, says Calvin, whose will is in perfect accord with His holy nature, is not free, but rather under a perfect necessity. "For there is such a close connection between the goodness of God and his Deity, that his being God is not more necessary than his being good."⁹ (Here, and again a moment later, Calvin is obviously inconsistent with his position referred to above that God's is an arbitrary, perfectly free will.)

To Calvin then freedom means the power of contrary choice in regard to good and evil. This power he emphatically denies to belong to man, whose will is enslaved to evil. Not even in civil matters does man possess the power of alternative choice. It should be apparent to all "that man is not possessed of free will for good works, unless he be assisted by grace, and that special grace which is bestowed on the elect alone in regeneration."¹⁰ This fact,

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John Calvin, op. cit., Vol. I, Bk. II, p. 239.

⁹ibid, p. 265.

¹⁰ibid, p. 238.

however, does not destroy man's responsibility. "Therefore, if a necessity of doing well impairs not the liberty of the Divine will in doing well; if the devil, who cannot but do evil, nevertheless sins voluntarily; who then will assert that man sins less voluntarily, because he is under a necessity of sinning?"¹¹ Sinning thus "voluntarily", i.e., of his own will, although not of a free will, man can be held fully accountable for his sins.

3. Original Sin

As has already been indicated, Calvin taught that man in his present state is utterly corrupt and depraved, unable by his own power to turn to God in faith and lead a holy life. The origin of this sinful and helpless condition is the first sin of Adam. In his unfallen state Adam's life was one of perfect holiness and purity, and these spiritual gifts belonged to him as a part of his human nature. (The fall brought him to a sub-natural plane, hence left him totally depraved.) In his unfallen estate Adam was also endowed with free will. Calvin describes his primitive condition as follows: "...he possessed reason, understanding, prudence, and judgment, not only for the government of his life on earth, but to enable him to ascend even to God and eternal felicity. To these was added choice, to direct the appetites, and regulate all the organic motions; so that the will should be entirely conformed to the government of reason. In this integrity man was endued with free will, by

¹¹John Calvin, op. cit., Vol. I, Bk. II, pp 265-266.

which, if he had chosen, he might have obtained eternal life."¹² He fell by his own unfettered election of evil.

"Adam, therefore, could have stood if he would, since he fell merely by his own will; but because his will was flexible to either side, and he was not endued with constancy to persevere, therefore he so easily fell."¹³

Calvin takes over the Augustinian idea of the unity of the race and its consequent liability for the first sin. Our nature was vitiated in Adam so that we are born corrupt and devoid of free will involving the opportunity to choose the good. Calvin stresses the fact, however, that our guilt is not for Adam's sin, but for our own. Except for the fact that our nature is corrupt at birth we would not be involved in the liability to everlasting damnation which is the penalty of the first sin. "These two things therefore should be distinctly observed: first, that our nature being so totally vitiated and depraved, we are, on account of this very corruption, considered as convicted and justly condemned in the sight of God, to whom nothing is acceptable but righteousness, innocence, and purity. And this liableness to punishment arises not from the delinquency of another; for when it is said that the sin of Adam renders us obnoxious to the Divine judgment, it is not to be understood as if we, though innocent, were undeservedly loaded with the guilt of his sin...."¹⁴ "The other thing to be remarked is,

¹²John Calvin, op.cit., Vol. I, Bk. I, p. 181

¹³ibid, p. 181.

¹⁴ibid, Vol. I, Bk. II, p. 229.



that this depravity never ceases in us, but is perpetually producing new fruits..."¹⁵ Calvin thus clearly holds that the first thing imputed to us is our own sinful nature, and that this is the ground of our liability to eternal punishment. Hence he would seem to be a mediate imputationist.

4. Grace

From his depraved and helpless condition man can be rescued only by the intervention of divine grace, that is to say, by a special operation of the indwelling Spirit, which is given to believers. This grace is not only unmerited and sovereignly bestowed by God, but it is, as Augustine held, irresistible,- certain to move the will of the elect individual to faith.

5. Final Perseverance

Once grace has produced genuine faith in us, once we are effectually called, there will be no falling away. All true believers are certain to be given the grace to persevere. To be sure, some who appear to be true believers do fall away, but this is because they never were genuine in their faith. Of them Calvin says: "I dispute not their having similar signs of calling with the elect; but I am far from admitting them to possess that certain assurance of election which I enjoin believers to seek from the word of the gospel."¹⁶ In this regard then Calvin differs from

¹⁵Calvin, op. cit., pp 229-230.

¹⁶ibid, Vol. II, Bk. III, p. 186.

Augustine, who held that a true believer might "fall from grace."

6. The Basis of Calvin's Determinism

Calvin was not zealous for the doctrine of predestination for speculative reasons, nor for that matter were the other Reformers. The motive behind his emphasis upon the doctrine was two-fold. (a) It was necessary, he felt, to uphold the truth of salvation by grace alone given unconditionally to the elect soul. (b) It was also necessary for the comfort of believers requiring an assurance of salvation. This desire for assurance influenced him in his doctrine of the certain perseverance of believers. In addition to these practical religious motives, which led him to his extreme emphasis upon God's unlimited power, Calvin's temperament made the idea of divine sovereignty, as contrasted with the nothingness of man, congenial to his mind. There was something in his religious devotion which instinctively expressed itself in the magnification of divine omnipotence.

III. The Arminian Revolt and the Synod of Dort

Objections to Calvinism had appeared during the life of Calvin himself. After his death the doctrine of predestination was set forth in its extreme supralapsarian form by Beza and others of his followers. The opposition which this provoked grew in intensity until it came to a head in a revolt led by James Arminius, a professor at Leyden. Arminianism, as the doctrine he taught came to be called, is a

protest against Calvinism on ethical grounds. It was clearly set forth by Arminius' disciples in 1610, the year after his death, in their Remonstrance, addressed to the States of Holland and West Friesland.

The Remonstrance contains a number of doctrines in opposition to Calvinistic determinism. Conditional election, or election dependent upon divine foreknowledge of faith, is affirmed. The inability of man to exercise saving faith, or do anything good without the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit is also asserted, but at the same time grace is said to be not irresistible. Finally, the perseverance of all believers is declared doubtful. Later the Arminians went even further on this last point, declaring definitely that believers may finally fall from grace.

Although there were leaders of exceptional talents in their ranks, the Arminians were greatly outnumbered by their opponents. The Remonstrance was met by a counter-remonstrance from the Calvinists, and a struggle ensued which resulted in the calling of the Synod of Dort in 1618 and the adoption of its famous Canons. It was attended by delegates from England and other Reformed Churches in addition to those from the Low Countries. The Arminians were not allowed to sit as members, but were invited to meet the Synod and present their cause. All their efforts, however, proved to be vain, and the Synod condemned their Remonstrance, sanctioned the Belgic and Heidelberg Confessions, which are both strongly Calvinistic, and promulgated five heads of doctrine of its own.

These five heads set forth an unadulterated, though moderate, form of Calvinism. The doctrine of predestination, although in sublapsarian form, is placed in the forefront of the system. In a sense predestination, in the Canons of Dort, is an even more fundamental principle than it was with Calvin. He laid primary emphasis upon it in order to ascribe to God all the glory for man's salvation and as a support to give the Christian greater assurance. The Synod of Dort, on the other hand, made it the fundamental principle in its own right, all God's soteriological activity being merely a carrying out of the decree of predestination. The elect are chosen from the fallen race, which has been condemned for its sin in Adam. They attain to assurance, but in various degrees. The decree of reprobation is asserted, but in the modified form of the praeterition of the non-elect. The corruption of human nature is said to be transmitted from Adam. No one can turn to God without regenerating grace. This is granted, however, only to the elect, in whom it takes the form of an efficient act of God, the effect of which is comparable to the raising of the dead to life. The mode of this action is inscrutable, but it is not to be identified with coercion, nor is it destructive of the human will. Finally, the perseverance of all the regenerated is explicitly asserted.

IV. The Covenant Theory

While Arminianism was a frontal attack on Calvinism there were also other movements designed to temper some of

its severities. The French School of Saumur and Pajonism both contained moderating features, but their influence in the Reformed Churches was not strong. Far more influential was the Federal or Covenant Theology, which won wide acceptance.

The Federal Theology, while not originated by him, was given precise and comprehensive formulation, and made current, by Cocceius, a theologian of Holland, Professor at Franeker and later at Leyden, where he died in 1669. According to it God has entered into two covenants with men. They are not like mutual contracts among men,- they are instituted by God, and men simply act the part of recipients. In the first covenant, the Covenant of Works, God promises to Adam everlasting blessings for himself and his descendants as the reward of a brief term of obedience, the penalty of failure being the depravity and eternal punishment of himself and his posterity. The Covenant of Grace is God's promise of salvation and forgiveness through Christ.

Whatever else may be said of the Federal Theology, it was in reality an ethical reform within Calvinism, designed to introduce legal relations instead of bare sovereignty alone into God's dealings with men. It eventually produced important changes in the doctrine of original sin. At first it was simply added to the Augustinian teaching that the first sin was generic as well as personal. It thus offered an explanation why the first sin of Adam is imputed to us but not his later offenses, nor the sins of our immediate ancestors. On the other hand, the participation of all men

in the first sin, and their consequent literal guilt for it were not denied. As time went on, however, the legal began to supplement the realistic conception of our relationship to Adam, and the more modern view rests on the Covenant alone.

According to this view Adam is conceived as having been the divinely constituted representative of mankind in virtue of his special kinship to them, as the first parent. His descendants have no guilt for his sin in the sense of blameworthiness. Their guilt is simply a legal liability to the penalty of that offense, a liability arising through their federal relationship to Adam. They are legally, not morally, responsible for Adam's act. Now the immediate penalty of his sin is our native depravity, while to this is attached eternal death as the penalty of this depravity. Adam's guilt is thus immediately imputed to us, our own corruption being the consequence rather than the condition of the imputation. Here we find a very significant divergence from Augustine and Calvin, both of whom taught that our corruption is due to the fact that we ourselves participated in the first sin, and that this actual participation, rather than a mere federal relationship, was the ground of our subsequent corruption/~~with~~ its attendant liability to everlasting punishment.

Beginning therefore as an ethical reform, the Federal Theory, divorced from the Augustinian conception, eventuated in a doctrine of original sin more arbitrary and unethical than the theory it supplanted. It substituted legal guilt

for real guilt. The explanation of its currency was the difficulty of reconciling the Augustinian theory with the doctrine of Creationism, which was the generally received opinion in the Protestant Church. Augustine himself placed ethics above logical consistency; the later Calvinists, more accustomed to compromising their ethical sentiments to fit the Calvinistic system, strove for what appeared to be logical consistency at any cost.

V. The Westminster Confession

For the English speaking world Calvinism was given its definitive statement in the Westminster Confession. This creed contains nothing new or different from the Canons of Dort, except that it incorporates the Federal Theology. The doctrine of God's decrees is brought into the forefront, but, as in the Canons of Dort, predestination is stated in its infra-lapsarian form. Election is unconditional. The non-elect are simply passed by (*praeterire*) and ordained "to dishonour and wrath for their sin, to the praise of His glorious justice."¹⁷ In attributing the reprobation of the non-elect to God's justice, the Confession differs from Calvin's position in the Institutes, where, as we have seen, election and reprobation are referred simply to God's arbitrary will. God is said to foreordain all things, "yet so as thereby neither is God the author of sin; nor is violence offered to the will of the creatures, nor is the liberty or

¹⁷Westminster Confession, Ch. III, Sec. VII.

contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established." ¹⁸

This liberty of will, however, does not mean the power of contrary choice. Man's will, it is true, is subject to no natural necessity,- "it is neither forced, nor by any absolute necessity of nature determined to good or evil." ¹⁹ On the other hand, man is in a state of complete moral inability, having "wholly lost all ability of will to any spiritual good accompanying salvation." ²⁰ Freedom means freedom to will the good. Here the Confession, rejecting Calvin's idea, goes back to the Augustinian notion of freedom.

Man possesses a sinful and corrupt nature transmitted to him from Adam. Our first parents were "endued with knowledge, righteousness and true holiness" and were "left to the liberty of their own will." ²¹ Their first sin ~~was~~ permitted by God. The transmission of their resultant evil nature, with its desert of everlasting punishment, is accounted for by the theory of Adam's federal headship of the race. Underlying this, however, is the Augustinian conception,- Adam and Eve are said to be "the root of all mankind." ²² In view of this combination of the federal and the Augustinian conceptions it is still a debated question whether the Confession teaches mediate or immediate imputation.

Divine grace is perfectly free, being conditioned upon

¹⁸Westminster Confession, Ch. III, Sec. I.

¹⁹ibid, Ch. IX, Sec. I.

²⁰ibid, Ch. IX, Sec. III.

²¹ibid, Ch. IV, Sec. II.

²²ibid, Ch. VI, Sec. III.

nothing at all foreseen in man. While the term, irresistible, is not used of God's grace, the idea is clearly conveyed. God is said effectually to call the elect by His word and Spirit, "renewing their wills, and by his almighty power determining them to that which is good; and effectually drawing them to Jesus Christ."²³ The recipients of the divine grace may fall into grievous sins, nevertheless they "can neither totally nor finally fall away from the state of grace; but shall certainly persevere therein to the end, and be eternally saved."²⁴

²³Westminster Confession, Ch. X, Sec. I.

²⁴ibid, Ch. XVII, Sec. I.

CHAPTER III

THE SOURCES OF EDWARDS' DETERMINISM

We are now to make a survey of the more immediate sources on which Edwards drew in the development of his deterministic system. Unfortunately, except for some illuminating statements in his diary and private papers, we have no account of his mental history from the time when, as a youth at college between the ages of thirteen and seventeen, he wrote his Notes on the Mind, till in his twenty-eighth year he delivered a public lecture in Boston entitled God Glorified in Man's Dependence, which revealed him as a full-fledged Calvinist. Nevertheless it is not difficult, with the aid of his diary, and from a study of his works, to ascertain when he became a Calvinist and to fix the chief sources of his deterministic thought. It should be remembered that Edwards was not an unoriginal thinker, particularly in his defense of Calvinism, and that frequently the source of his thought was his own fertile intellect. In some respects, however, he leaned heavily on others, and it is therefore important to inquire into the external sources from which he drew.

I. New England Calvinism

Beyond all doubt the real fountain head of Edwards' determinism was the Calvinistic theology of New England in his day. This was the Calvinism of the Westminster Confession, which was accepted on practically all sides in that highly religious community as a definitive statement of Christian truth. Edwards grew up in Calvinistic surroundings, and when he came to the point of thinking for himself, it never occurred to him that the prevailing theology might be in error. His Puritan ancestry, the character of his training, and the circumstances of the time, all conspired together to make it almost inevitable that he should champion Calvinism. There is no suggestion that he ever questioned its essential truth, but on the contrary every indication that he regarded it as final, and looked upon any difficulty he experienced in accepting it as a misfortune. In his works he does not think of himself as an innovator, but as a defender of the "standard Calvinism", to use Warfield's phrase.

In his Memoirs Hopkins prints some extracts from Edwards' private papers, written about 1743, which bear upon his religious experience. There is one paragraph in these which sheds so much light on the origin of his Calvinism that we quote it in full. "From my childhood up, my mind has been full of objections against the doctrine of God's sovereignty, in choosing whom he would to eternal life, and rejecting whom he pleased; leaving them eternally to perish, and be everlastingly tormented in hell. It used to appear

like a horrible doctrine to me. But I remember the time very well, when I seemed to be convinced, and fully satisfied, as to this sovereignty of God, and his justice in thus eternally disposing of men, according to his sovereign pleasure. But never could give an account, how, or by what means, I was thus convinced, not in the least imagining at the time, nor a long time after, that there was any extraordinary influence of God's Spirit in it; but only that now I saw further, and my reason apprehended the justice and reasonableness of it. However, my mind rested in it; and it put an end to all those cavils and objections. And there has been a wonderful alteration in my mind, with respect to the doctrine of God's sovereignty, from that day to this; so that I scarce ever have found so much as the rising of an objection against it, in the most absolute sense, in God shewing mercy to whom he will shew mercy, and hardening whom he will. God's absolute sovereignty and justice, with respect to salvation and damnation, is what my mind seems to rest assured of, as much as of anything that I see with my eyes; at least it is so at times. But I have often, since that first conviction, had quite another kind of sense of God's sovereignty than I had then. I have often since had not only a conviction, but a delightful conviction. The doctrine has very often appeared exceeding pleasant, bright, and sweet. Absolute sovereignty is what I love to ascribe to God. But my first conviction was not so." ¹

¹Jonathan Edwards, quoted by

Samuel Hopkins, *Memoirs of Edwards*, in *Edwards' Works*, ed. by Edward Williams & Edward Parsons, Vol. I, pp 29-30.

This "conversion" to the doctrine of sovereignty occurred in 1721, soon after Edwards left college, when he was eighteen years of age, and was so complete that he seems never again to have questioned it. From his own account of it, just quoted, it is clear that he was adopting as his own the Calvinism in which he was reared. The fact that he had felt objections to it showed that he was thinking, and perhaps also that he was acquainted with the Arminianism which was a growing tendency in his day. Yet the passage shows clearly that his objections were not genuine doubts as to the truth of Calvinism, but only qualms of heart and mind at the unpalatable elements it involved. His problem was never to decide upon its truth, but only to discipline a recalcitrant reason into acceptance of it. "The Puritan assumptions were so ingrained in his nature that the agony of mind which they caused never led him to question their truth, though it animated him to discover a means of reconciling them to reason; and the reconciliation is the whole burden of his ablest works."²

Calvinism, as expressed in the Westminster Confession and mediated by his New England heredity, was thus the fundamental source of the deterministic elements in Edwards' theology. He of course read more deeply into Calvinistic thought as he developed. He reveals a familiarity with Calvin himself, he had studied Turretine carefully, and he knew such writers as van Mastricht, and Jean Frederic Stapfer. He

²Leslie Stephen, *Hours in a Library*, Vol. I, p. 284.

also read all the works of the British Calvinists he could lay his hands on in Colonial New England, though he felt that they were in many cases receding from the soundly Calvinistic faith.

Edwards was always independent in his thought, differing sometimes, as we shall see, with Calvin and the Westminster Confession. He admitted that he might be called a Calvinist as distinguished from an Arminian, but he frankly disavowed any dependence on Calvin and asserted that with some of his views he did not agree. In the Preface to his Enquiry into the Freedom of the Will he states his own relationship to Calvinism in the following manner. "Yet I should not take it at all amiss, to be called a Calvinist, for distinction's sake: though I utterly disclaim a dependence on Calvin, or believing the doctrines which I hold, because he believed and taught them; and cannot justly be charged with believing in every thing just as he taught."³ Here we have at once an assertion of independence and an admission that he was, on the whole, following in the line of his Calvinistic heritage.

Although Edwards adjusted himself intellectually to Calvinism, he never became completely at home in it emotionally. This fact is witnessed to by certain significant deviations he made from the strictly Calvinistic system. The emotional estrangement must be attributed to the fact

³ Jonathan Edwards, An Enquiry into the Freedom of the Will, Works, Vol. I, p. 124. (For full title of this work see Bibliography. It will subsequently be listed as the Enquiry.)

that he approached Calvinism primarily as an intellectual structure he should accept. His theological determinism was not the result of a religious experience such as Calvin had had, an experience which implied for the latter the doctrine of predestination as a fundamental conviction. The failure on Edwards' part to enter into Calvinism completely by way of a deep religious experience, and the consequent deviations from the system at vital points, made him the father of the New England Theology, in which there was a gradual movement away from Calvin. His departures from strict Calvinism are in one sense slight, but from the perspective of subsequent history they are highly significant.

It might be added here that the Bible was not one of Edwards' sources. While he quotes copiously from Scripture in defense of his Calvinistic positions, he was not primarily a student of Scripture, and he did not derive his determinism from it. This is evident both from what we know of his mental development and from the way in which he used Scripture. In his defenses of Calvinism we find him calling on the Bible merely as an added support for his positions. He appealed to it largely as a partisan who regarded it primarily as an arsenal of proof-texts, although in so doing he was in keeping with the practice of his time.

II. Philosophical Sources

Edwards was greatly influenced in his theology by philosophical considerations. In view of this, and of the fact that certain elements in that part of his system we are

to study are largely philosophical in nature, it is of importance to investigate his philosophical heritage.

1. Edwards and Berkeley

During his college days he had come to the conclusion that the world is "an ideal one", a position to which he gave expression in his Notes on the Mind, written while a student at Yale. He sums up his position as follows: "That, which truly is the Substance of all Bodies, is the infinitely exact, and precise, and perfectly stable Idea, in God's mind, together with his stable Will, that the same shall gradually be communicated to us, and to other minds, according to certain fixed and exact established Methods and Laws."⁴ Developing before his "conversion" to Calvinism, this idealism furnished a stage from which he moved naturally and without any emotional jarring into the Calvinistic system. From a philosophy which thought of God in terms of Absolute Mind, ^{one} to/which thought of Him, at least largely, in terms of Absolute Will, the transition was easy. Nor did Edwards surrender his idealism in moving from his philosophical, to his predominantly theological stage. It appears to have remained, and to have exercised a significant influence in his theological thought. It apparently underlies his defense of the theory of our identity with Adam in the first sin, and can also be seen in his idea of God's grace as a divine and supernatural illumination immediately imparted to the soul.

⁴ Edwards, Notes on the Mind, in Works, Edited by S. E. Dwight, Vol. I, p. 674.

"The problem of Edwards' idealism", says Professor Woodbridge Riley, "is the most difficult in the history of American philosophy. Was it his own, or borrowed, or both?"⁵ So closely akin is it to that of Berkeley that many have thought he adopted it from the English thinker. This was the view of Professor Fraser, Berkeley's biographer, although in his last editions of Berkeley's writings he admitted less disposition to hold the conjecture than formerly. The weight of opinion today regards Edwards as independent of Berkeley. Professor George Park Fisher remarks that it was once his impression that Edwards had drawn on Berkeley, but concedes, in his edition of Edwards' unpublished Essay on the Trinity, that this inference is in the highest degree improbable.⁶ This is the position also of Professor Egbert C. Smyth, who did much to increase our knowledge of Edwards' early intellectual development, and of Professor H. Norman Gardiner, who has made a special study of his youthful idealism. One of Edwards' latest biographers, Professor A. C. McGiffert, Jr., holds the view that he could not have been acquainted with Berkeley's writings at the time he formulated his own philosophy. Berkeley's Principles appeared in 1710, and his Hylas and Philonous in 1713, while Edwards' Notes on the Mind were written between 1716 and 1720. There is undoubtedly a strong probability that the works of the English writer did not cross the Atlantic so soon after pub-

⁵J. Woodbridge Riley, *American Philosophy, the Early Schools*, p. 129.

⁶George P. Fisher, *An Unpublished Essay of Edwards on the Trinity, with Remarks on Edwards and his Theology*, p. 18.

lication, although it is by no means impossible.

Apart, however, from this, there is practically convincing evidence that Edwards developed his philosophy independently of Berkeley. There is, to begin with, absolutely no external evidence that he knew Berkeley's works. His frequent references to Locke and to other writers he knew establish the presumption that he would have mentioned Berkeley, had he known him, especially had he been drawing the fundamental principle of his philosophy from him. A second reason for believing him independent of Berkeley is the fact that he writes as if his ideas were new: the Notes on the Mind pointedly suggest that the author felt he was breaking new trails. Again, it is entirely possible that the brilliant young Edwards should have arrived at his idealism independently. We know he had read Locke, Cudworth, and Newton, (whom next to Locke he most admired), and the stimulus imparted by contact with these minds might well have set him on a path of his own, just as Berkeley himself had moved forward from Locke. Finally, as Professor Woodbridge Riley points out, there are some significant divergences between Edwards and Berkeley in their idealism, which indicate the independence of the former. In view of these considerations, there seems to be no ground for regarding Berkelianism as a part of Edwards' philosophical background except the striking similarities in their philosophy, a reason which is entirely insufficient.

In the speculation on the origin of Edwards' idealism, four other philosophers have been suggested as possible

sources,- Descartes, Malebranche, Norris, and Arthur Collier. But while there are affinities between Edwards and these writers, the assumption of actual connection is highly gratuitous.

2. Edwards and Other British Philosophers

If Edwards did not derive his idealism from Berkeley, Locke is left as the sole philosopher whose influence is clearly traceable in his deterministic writings. He did not read French and German, and was, therefore, limited to philosophical works in English and Latin. There is no evidence that he read in Latin anything but the writings of the Fathers and of some later Protestant theologians, such as Calvin. Of the British philosophers we know that he read Cudworth, but there is no way of tracing to him any specific elements in Edwards' thought, and the probability is that he was more a stimulus than a source of ideas. There are some striking resemblances between statements and arguments in the Enquiry into the Freedom of the Will and passages in Hobbes and Collins, but Edwards remarks that he had never read Hobbes, and the same is probably true in regard to Collins.

Similarities have been pointed out between Edwards and David Hume in their notions of causation, and of the necessity of volitions. We know that Edwards had read Hume,- in 1755, the year after the publication of the Enquiry into the Freedom of the Will, he writes to Erskine, one of his Scottish correspondents, of having read one of Hume's works. "I had

before read that book of Essays (i.e., by Lord Kames), having borrowed Mr. Bellamy's, and also that book of Mr. David Hume's, which you speak of. I am glad of an opportunity to read such corrupt books, especially when written by men of considerable genius; that I may have an idea of the notions that prevail in our nation."⁷ As we shall see, Edwards was accused of holding a theory of the will identical with that of Kames, an accusation he indignantly repelled. It is, of course, inevitable that similarities should exist between deterministic thinkers, and Edwards was very close to some of the views of men like Hobbes, Collins, Hume and Kames, but there was certainly no conscious drawing upon any philosopher but Locke, and it is impossible to fix on any definite elements in his thought which betray even an unconscious indebtedness to others, beyond that which one owes any author who has been carefully read. In addition to the philosophers mentioned, Edwards was acquainted with such men as Shaftesbury, Paschal, Chevalier Ramsey, Henry Grove, George Turnbull, Samuel Clarke, and Bishop Butler. 1 2/

It is perhaps appropriate here to mention his indebtedness to the great scientist, Sir Isaac Newton. If he might be said to have had any masters at all, they were Newton and Locke. He studied Newton's works diligently, and from them enlarged and clarified his conception of universal causation and the reign of natural law. While his intellectual con-

⁷Quoted by S. E. Dwight, in his Memoir of President Edwards, in Dwight's edition of Edwards' Works, Vol. I, p. 550.

nection with Newton is not as explicit as that with Locke, the conception of causation and law in the universe, in which Newton confirmed him, underlies his whole deterministic system and is adhered to with the utmost consistency.

3. Edwards and Locke

Edwards' philosophical background, particularly that which is reflected in his deterministic writings, is almost entirely Locke's Essay on Human Understanding. This stimulating work was read by him during his second year in college, that is, when he was about fourteen. He not only read it with minute care, but declared that it gave him far higher pleasure "than the most greedy miser finds, when gathering up handfulls of silver and gold from some newly-discovered treasure."⁸ This frank acknowledgment of his debt to Locke does not indicate on Edwards' part any lack of independence in the reading. He truly owed more to Locke than to any other philosopher, but Leslie Stephen is substantially correct in saying that he derived from Locke more the impulse to intellectual activity than a body of doctrine. He differed from the older philosopher on fundamental points, such, for instance, as Locke's sensationalism.

The place in which Edwards' debt is greatest and most apparent is his theory of the will. At this point, while he is not guilty of blind reproduction of his master, he really finds in Locke the substance of his own theory. To note the

⁸Quoted by S. E. Dwight, in his Memoir of President Edwards, in Dwight's edition of Edwards' Works, Vol. I, p. 30.

precise extent of his dependence, it will be necessary for us to investigate Locke's theory of the will as it is set forth in his well known chapter on Power. Edwards has been supposed also to have derived from Locke's chapter on Identity and Diversity the principle of his defense of the position that we are identical with Adam in respect of the first sin. Hence we shall also make some inquiry into the positions Locke takes in this chapter. Apart from these two points, there is no traceable influence of Locke in Edwards' deterministic writings.

It is apparent in the quotations he makes from Locke, and from certain positions ascribed to the latter, that Edwards read the seventh, i.e., the last, edition of Locke's Essay, in which there are some significant alterations of positions taken in the chapter on Power as it appeared in the first edition. We shall, therefore, use the seventh edition as the basis of our study.

a. Locke's Chapter on Power

Locke begins his discussion by asserting that we have in ourselves two powers, a will and an understanding, or perceptive power. These powers, he says, may be called faculties, provided we realize that a faculty is not a distinct agent in the self. From this latter position, however, he departs as soon as he begins to discuss the relation of will and desire.

Freedom, to Locke, means a man's capacity to do what he wills or prefers to do. "So far as a man has power to

think, or not to think, to move or not to move, according to the preference or direction of his own mind, so far is a man free." ⁹ Such being its nature, Locke emphasizes the fact that "liberty is not an idea belonging to volition or preferring; but to the person having the power of doing, or forbearing to do, according as the mind shall choose or direct." ¹⁰ We can no more speak of our will as free than we can of sleep as being swift, or virtue, square. To do so would be to think of the will as a substance, or an agent, whereas it is only a power belonging to an agent. Locke's view is well stated in an oft-quoted sentence, in which he says that "we may as properly say, that is the singing faculty sings, and the dancing faculty dances, as that the will chooses." ¹¹ In this position Locke is followed exactly by Edwards.

Now there can be no freedom, Locke points out, without thought and volition, or will. "Whenever thought is wholly wanting, or the power to act or forbear, according to the direction of thought, there necessity takes place." ¹² On the other hand the existence of these does not guarantee freedom, for they do not guarantee our capacity to perform, or refrain from, the action preferred or not preferred.

It is essential for the understanding of Locke's theory and of Edwards' relation to him to note the distinction he

⁹ John Locke, Essay on Human Understanding, Vol. I, Bk. II,
¹⁰ *ibid*, p. 222. /Ch. XXI, p. 221.
¹¹ *ibid*, p. 225.
¹² *ibid*, p. 223.

draws between preferring and willing. In a passage quoted by Edwards he explains that we do not necessarily always will what we prefer. The passage follows: "For example, preferring, which seems perhaps best to express the act of volition, does it not precisely. For though a man would prefer flying to walking, yet who can say he ever wills it?"¹³ In the same way he insists that^a distinction is to be drawn between will and desire, which frequently are confounded. "This well considered, plainly shows that the will is perfectly distinguished from desire; which in the very same action may have a quite contrary tendency from that which our will sets us upon."¹⁴ The latter part of this statement cannot be reconciled with Locke's position which we shall shortly examine, that the willⁱ is determined by an uneasiness, for uneasiness is usually a desire. But the fact that he distinguishes willing and desiring is unquestionable. In this recognition of the difference between the emotional and the conative aspects of the self he thus diverges from the position expressed in the beginning of his chapter, that the "powers" of the mind are only two, understanding and willing. At this point Edwards declines to follow his master, insisting that willing is always preferring, and, though with somewhat less assurance, that it always coincides with desire.

To return now to the question of freedom, Locke insists that it is not only improper to attribute freedom to the

¹³John Locke, op. cit., p. 224.

¹⁴ibid, p. 231.

will, which is a mere power, but also to say that in willing a man is free. It is apparent, he says, that when a man contemplates a certain action, he cannot forbear either willing it or not willing it. The question will then arise whether "a man be at liberty to will which of the two he pleases, motion or rest?"¹⁵ But this question, he answers, is absurd. The reason for its absurdity he gives in the two following sentences, which contain the staple of Edwards' famous reductio ad absurdum of the Arminian conception of a self-determining power in the will. "For to ask, whether a man be at liberty to will either motion or rest, speaking or silence, which he pleases; is to ask, whether a man can will what he wills, or be pleased with what he is pleased with. A question which, I think, needs no answer; and they who can make a question of it, must suppose one will to determine the acts of another, and another to determine that; and so on in infinitum." ¹⁶ Our volitions then are determined, and our freedom pertains solely to our capacity to perform the action willed. It is thus true that the freedom of the man is quite consistent with the necessity of his volitions. e/

In answer to the question, What determines the will? Locke replies that it is the mind, but he goes on to explain that something moves the mind to do this. The motive for continuing in the same state or action is only the present satisfaction in it, while the motive leading to change, or new action, is some uneasiness. We are, therefore,

¹⁵ Locke, op.cit., p. 229.

¹⁶ ibid, p. 229.

determined by some uneasiness under which we find ourselves. "This uneasiness", he says, "we may call, as it is, desire; which is an uneasiness of the mind for want of some absent good." ¹⁷ Locke later states that it is sometimes an uneasiness which cannot be identified with desire, though he holds that uneasiness is at least always accompanied by desire. He apparently overlooks the fact that, in distinguishing will and desire, he had asserted the possibility of our willing that which we do not desire. Edwards is led, probably by Locke, to hesitate in identifying desiring and willing, but he definitely disagrees with Locke in the latter's view that they may sometimes clash, and in this respect is more consistent than his master.

Locke remarks that when he first published his thoughts upon the question of the will he accepted the general opinion that the greater good determines the will, but that upon stricter inquiry, he had been "forced to conclude, that good, the greater good, though apprehended and acknowledged to be so, does not determine the will, until our desire, raised proportionably to it, makes us uneasy in the want of it." ¹⁸ As there may be various "uneasinesses" in a man at ^{any} one time, Locke concludes that the will is determined by "the most pressing of those that are judged capable of being then removed." ¹⁹

He next proceeds to show what "moves" desire, and asserts that all desire is desire for happiness or pleasure.

¹⁷ Locke, op.cit., p.232. ¹⁸ibid, p. 233. ¹⁹ibid, p.237.

We call that which will produce happiness in us, good, and that which brings pain, evil. But this does not mean that all good moves every man's desire; only that good moves the individual's desire which is considered essential to his present happiness. This being true, it is not always the case that the "greater visible good" produces desire,- it may not be felt necessary to our present happiness. Individuals differ in their judgment as to what constitutes their greatest happiness, hence the different courses men pursue. It will be noticed that in this account of what "moves" desire, Locke reveals himself as an unquestioned hedonist. And it is in all probability on account of Locke that Edwards takes the same position, asserting that our will is determined by that which is the most agreeable.

While, as he has said, it is the greatest and most pressing uneasiness that determines the will, Locke admits that this is not universally true. Man has the power, he says, to suspend the execution and satisfaction of any of his desires until he can deliberate upon their objects. This gives him the power to contemplate an absent good, until, by repeated contemplation, it is brought nearer the mind, and raises in him some desire by which it may work upon the will. This power of deliberation, Lock~~e~~ adds, is all the liberty any man has,- "in this seems to consist that which is (as I think improperly) called free-will." ²⁰ Thanks to this power, our will can be determined by "the last result

²⁰Locke, op. cit., p. 242.

of our own minds, judging of the good or evil of any action."²¹ This is a far better freedom, says Locke, than "a perfect indifferency in the mind", which leaves it uninfluenced by any judgment of the good or evil of an act. The freest agents are determined, even God Himself. "God almighty himself is under the necessity of being happy."²²

While his language in some cases might seem to imply that the power to suspend action is a power of contrary choice, this is certainly not in Locke's mind. As Edwards pointed out, in dealing with a supposed evasion of his reasoning, according to which the mind's liberty of indifference might be said to consist in its power to suspend the act of will pending consideration, the decision to suspend is itself a volition. Now Locke would certainly not grant that this volition arises spontaneously,- it comes about, as all others do, as the result of a preceding uneasiness.

Now this liberty, consisting in a power to suspend volition and deliberate upon the object of the desire giving rise to it, is, as Locke himself recognizes, different from the liberty which consists in the capacity to perform the action willed. In identifying it with the power of suspension and deliberation, Locke has moved to a new idea of freedom. It is in reality a sort of liberty in willing. "But yet there is a case wherein a man is at liberty in respect of willing, and that is the choosing of a remote good as an end to be pursued."²³ Now in view of this capacity to

²¹Locke, op.cit., p. 243.
²²ibid, p. 244.

²³ibid, pp 247-248.

choose the remote good, as the result of suspension of action and deliberation, man can be held responsible for his conduct. He does not have to choose the lesser goods, even though his will is always determined. "And here we may see how it comes to pass, that a man may justly incur punishment, though it be certain that in all the particular actions that he wills, he does, and necessarily does, will that which he then judges to be good. For though his will be always determined by that which is judged good by his understanding, yet it excuses him not; because by a too hasty choice of his own making, he has imposed on himself wrong measures of good and evil." ²⁴

There are various reasons why men choose the worse instead of the better. Sometimes it is because of desires arising from bodily pain, and sometimes because of wrong desires due to wrong and blameworthy judgments as to what constitutes the greater happiness, (particularly wrong judgments about the value of absent goods). Locke holds that men never err in their judgments about present good or evil, i.e., pleasure or pain, but that mistakes are apt to arise when we compare present pleasure or pain with future. The cause of our misjudgment in this respect is "the weak and narrow constitution of our minds", ²⁵ which leads us to concern ourselves almost exclusively with present pleasure and pain. Even if we do consider future pleasures, they do not have the capacity, in competition with present pleasures,

²⁴Locke, op.cit., p. 248.

²⁵ibid, p. 253.

to commend themselves to us in proportion to their value. Added to our errors about pleasures and pains in themselves are our misjudgments, through ignorance and inadvertency, regarding the consequences in pleasure and pain of certain lines of action. We can, however, by consideration, effort and practice, alter our tastes as to what is pleasant and unpleasant to us, and thus can come to desire virtue as opposed to vice.

This completes Locke's account of volition and its cause. Having shown that it is determined by the most pressing uneasiness, or desire, and that this in turn is due to what we apprehend to be our greatest pleasure, he goes no further. The question is still left unanswered as to how we arrive at our judgment of the greatest happiness. Locke's discussion of the source of error in this judgment, particularly his demonstration of how we choose a lesser pleasure which is present to a greater one which is absent, does suggest that our judgments depend partly on our circumstances. He mentions nothing, however, about any part played by our nature or character. Edwards goes beyond Locke at this point, at least in explicitness, explaining very carefully that volitions arise in the last analysis from our character, or "the state of the mind", in relation to our situation.

As we shall see, Edwards' theory of volition is on the whole substantially that of Locke. He gives us nothing of import that is new. There are just enough differences between him and the English philosopher to make us sure that he was thinking independently, even if not with great

originality. If, however, Edwards' theory of volition is not original, his elucidation and defense of it far surpass anything that Locke attempted. In the fulness[/]of his treatment, the minuteness with which he examined every point, and the acuteness with which he defended his position and ferreted out the fallacies of his adversaries, his real originality is revealed.

b. Locke's Theory of Identity and Diversity

In his attempt to establish man's responsibility for Adam's first sin, Edwards asserts the literal identity of Adam and his posterity in that sinful act. The argument in the defense of this position is drawn, it has been held, from the chapter in Locke's Essay on Identity and Diversity. In order to compare Edwards' argument with Locke's theory, we shall therefore examine here the leading ideas set forth by Locke in the chapter in question.

He begins by pointing out that the notions of identity and diversity arise from the comparison of anything existing at one time and place with itself existing at another time. The identity of an object consists in two things, it would appear, namely, (1) its existence in a particular time and place, which excludes the possibility of its being anything other than itself, and (2) the identification of the object existing at one moment with its existing in a previous point of time. To quote Locke's own statement: "When we see anything to be in any place in any instant of time, we are sure (be it what it will) that it is that very thing, and not

another, which at that same time exists in another place, how like and undistinguishable soever it may be in all other respects: and in this consists identity, when the ideas it is attributed to, vary not at all from what they were that moment wherein we consider their former existence, and to which we compare the present." ²⁶ Elsewhere he expresses this more succinctly by the statement that continuous existence constitutes identity. From this Locke draws a corollary: "From whence it follows, that one thing cannot have two beginnings of existence, nor two things one beginning; it being impossible for two things of the same kind to be or exist in the same instant, in the same place, or one and the same thing in different places." ²⁷ At this point Edwards is completely at variance with Locke, since he was a Creationist, and denied the necessity of continuous existence for the identification of things existing at different points of time.

While, as we have said, identity for Locke involves a comparison of an object with itself at two different times and, therefore some duration in the existence of the object, it is true that his language sometimes implies identity to consist solely in the existence of an object at one time and place so as thereby to exclude the existence of another like object in the same place and time. For instance, after his introductory remarks on the nature of identity in general, he concludes in this way: "From what has been said, it is easy

²⁶Locke, op. cit., Ch. xxvii, p. 306. ²⁷ibid, p. 306.

to discover what is so much inquired after, the principium individuationis; and that, it is plain, is existence itself, which determines a being of any sort to a particular time and place incommunicable to two beings of the same kind."²⁸ Now if identity consists solely in the principium individuationis as here stated, no continuous existence is necessary. However, in regard to the identity of an object existing in successive moments of time, it is obvious that the comparison between the object at one moment and another must be made, - and Locke makes it clear that the identity cannot be established if there were two separate beginnings, that is, unless the object has had continuous existence from one time to the other. This is the position that bears on Edwards' discussion, since he is interested only in the identity of objects existing at different times, as is Locke himself, and we need not, therefore, concern ourselves with the inconsistency in Locke's statement of his position.

Having shown wherein identity consists in general, Locke next takes up the identity of various objects, vegetables, animals, man and persons. In the case of the first three, the identity consists, he says, not in the identity of the substances of which they are composed, but in each case, in a certain continuous organization of the particles which successively compose the organism and a common life in which they participate. This organization and common life are permanent and self-identical, while the particles change.

²⁸ John Locke, op. cit., p. 307.

Locke distinguishes the man from the person, meaning by the former simply the animal or physical man.

Most of the discussion of identity is concerned with the problem of personal identity. This, Locke concludes, consists in the continued existence of the same consciousness. "For, since consciousness always accompanies thinking, and it is that which makes everyone to be what he calls self, and thereby distinguishes himself from all other thinking things; in this alone consists personal identity, i.e., the sameness of a rational being: and as far as this consciousness can be extended backwards to any past action or thought, so far reaches the identity of that person; it is the same self now that it was then; and it is by the same self with this present one that now reflects on it, that that action was done."²⁹ Now personal identity, Locke continues, has nothing to do with the continued existence of the "same substance", or same "thinking thing." "For it being the same consciousness that makes a man to be himself, to himself, personal identity depends on that only, whether it be annexed solely to one individual substance, or can be continued in a succession of several substances."³⁰ If the same consciousness is transferred from one soul, or spirit, or "thinking substance" to another, these two will be the same person. On the other hand, the same spirit or immaterial substance, if not always accompanied by the same consciousness, would be different persons. It is on personal

²⁹Locke, op. cit., pp 312-313. ³⁰ibid, p. 313.

identity in this sense of sameness of consciousness that responsibility is founded. We are not accountable for anything our consciousness does not claim as our own.

III. Arminianism in New England and Abroad

No account of Edwards' intellectual and theological background would be complete without a statement of the Arminian views against which he wrote, and which really occasioned his deterministic works. They constitute the negative sources of his determinism. There was in his day a growing tendency toward Arminianism, even in quarters which were by tradition strongly Calvinistic. As early as the period in which New England was colonized, there had existed not only disagreement with minor features of Calvinism, but also open dissent from its characteristic principle of unconditional election, even in Calvinistic communities. In Edwards' time Samuel Webster, Charles Chauncy and Peter Clark had taken up the pen in defense of certain doctrines which were subversive of Calvinism. This tendency was highly alarming to Edwards, and he determined to check it by his treatises, notably those on the will and original sin, in which he undertook to give a final answer to every argument advanced by the Arminians. The spearhead of the Arminian attack, as far as it was known to him at firsthand, was a group of English writers, including Mr. Thomas Chubb, Dr. Philip Doddridge, Dr. George Turnbull, Dr. Samuel Clarke, Dr. Isaac Watts, Dr. John Taylor of Norwich, and Dr. Daniel Whitby. They were of varying theological opinions,- indeed

Watts and Doddridge were supposedly Calvinists,- but they were all one in their Arminian tendencies. All of these men are referred to in Edwards' writings, and it is therefore desirable to have some idea/of their general position on the points of dispute between the Calvinists and the Arminians. This position is well stated in a treatise on the Five Points of Calvinism written by Dr. Whitby, a work which is the most frequently quoted and attacked by Edwards in his polemics against the Arminians. In a letter to the Rev. John Erskine, of Scotland, in 1752, in connection with his projected treatise on the Free Will controversy, Edwards says: "In this essay, I propose to take particular notice of the writings/of Dr. Whitby, and Mr. Chubb, and the writings of some others, who, though not properly Pelagians, nor Arminians, yet, in their notions of the freedom of the will, have, in the main, gone into the same scheme." ³¹

Dr. Whitby's book, which ran through four editions, takes up the distinctly Calvinistic doctrines one by one, exposing their fallacies and establishing the contrary Arminian position. The full title of the work is A Discourse Concerning Election and Reprobation, The Extent of Christ's Redemption, The Grace of God, The Liberty of the Will, and The Perseverance or Defectibility of the Saints. He begins with a discourse in which he undertakes to show that/decrees the doctrine of the of absolute election and reprobation is inconsistent with the teaching of the Bible and of the Fathers. God, he

³¹Quoted by S. E. Dwight, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 498.

argues, is not taught by Scripture to decree the reprobation of any individuals,- He reprobates only the "corruption of men's faith or manners." Of the election taught in Scripture Whitby says that (1) it is not of particular persons, but of whole churches and nations, (2) it is an election to the enjoyment of the means of grace rather than to certain salvation, and (3) it is a conditional election to be made sure of by good works.

The second discourse is directed against the Calvinistic doctrine of a limited atonement. With Scripture citations supplemented by an appeal to reason, he argues that Christ's atonement is universal in its intent as well as in its sufficiency.

In the next section Whitby argues against the doctrine of an "irresistible and unfrustrable" operation of divine grace in conversion. "Grace in the Scripture", he says, "when it is styled, the grace of God, imports His favor and His kind affection to us."³² This is shown first in His gift to us of the gospel as a rule of life. But in addition to this Whitby recognizes that God vouchsafes to men "some inward operations or assistances to incline them to what is good, and work conversion in them."³³ This inward assistance consists, first "in representing the divine truths, which holy scriptures do contain and press upon us, more

³²Daniel Whitby, A Discourse Concerning Election and Reprobation, The Extent of Christ's Redemption, The Grace of God, The Liberty of Will, and The Perseverance or Defectibility of the Saints, 4th edition, p. 187.

³³ibid, p. 189.

clearly to our understandings, that we may have a fuller evidence, stronger conviction, and assurance of them...and this is styled THE ILLUMINATION OF THE MIND." ³⁴ In connection with this Whitby says a few pages above that "what makes the will chuse, is something approved by the understanding, and consequently appearing to the soul as good; and whatsoever it refuseth, is something represented by the understanding, and so appearing to the will as evil." ³⁵ Edwards seizes upon the passage in which this statement occurs, and quotes it at length in his Enquiry into the Freedom of the Will as conceding his view that the will follows the "latest dictate of the understanding". It can hardly be denied that Whitby laid himself open to attack at this point by the language he used, but he later makes it clear that he conceives the will as free to respond or not to the illumination of our understandings by the Spirit.

The inward operation of the Spirit consists, in the second place, says Whitby, in the bringing to our remembrance of divine motives to encourage us in the performance of our duty. He adds that "the highest motives and inducements possible offered to us in the name of the great God of heaven, when firmly believed and present to the mind, must be sufficient to produce their ends." ³⁶ Here again the language lends itself to a deterministic interpretation, although this is farthest from the author's intention. He goes on to clarify his position by stating that the Holy Spirit produces

³⁴ Whitby, op.cit., p. 200. ³⁵ ibid, p. 193. ³⁶ ibid, p. 200.

ideas in our minds by a "physical" operation, in which we are wholly passive. To this extent the activity of the Spirit is irresistible, and for this very reason we are not responsible for the ideas thus produced. Our responsibility is limited to the response we freely make to them. Nevertheless, God deserves the praise for all our good acts, because all the inducements come from Him, as well as the power of consenting to them.

Whitby next enters into the question of the freedom of the will. He begins with the proposition that man is in a state of trial and probation in the world. From this it follows that man must have the power of contrary choice as between the good and the evil, between accepting the gospel and rejecting it. "This liberty", he says, however, "is indeed no perfection of human nature; for it supposes us imperfect, as being subject to fall by temptation, and when we are advanced to 'the spirits of just men made perfect', or to a fixed state of happiness, will, with our other imperfections 'be done away'; but yet it is a freedom absolutely requisite, as we conceive, to render us capable of trial or probation, and to render our actions worthy of praise or dispraise, and our persons of rewards or punishments; nor is this liberty essential to man as man, but only necessary to a man placed in a state of trial, and under the power of temptation."³⁷ It will follow from this that the determination of the human will cannot be argued from the

³⁷Whitby, op. cit., p. 262.

fact that the will of God, and Christ, and of good angels is determined to the good, and that of evil angels to the evil. These beings are not in a state of probation, and therefore freedom in the sense of contrary choice is not necessary to them. Whitby is quite ready to recognize a freedom which means only freedom from co-action, not from all necessity. The wills of God and Christ and the angels are determined, according to him, yet these beings are free.

Having asserted man's power of contrary choice, he proceeds to argue the necessity of such liberty on the ground that it is essential to moral responsibility. No man can be praised or blamed for his actions if he is determined to the good by divine grace, or to the evil by a corrupt nature he did not produce and cannot control. Unless man has the power of alternative choice, God cannot rightfully issue commands to him or hold him accountable for his attitude toward the gospel. In addition to this proof of alternative choice on moral grounds, Whitby attempts also to establish it by appeals to Scripture. The Bible does not teach, he declares, that man by the fall lost the liberty of his will; on the contrary, it insists upon this liberty, a liberty which is freedom from all necessity. He concludes by citing the opinions of the Fathers, and reasoning from "the received notion of the word", liberty, and the common sense of mankind, in a cumulative argument to show the necessity of recognizing the power of contrary choice. Those who deny man such liberty, he asserts, are really in agreement with Mr. Hobbes and the fatalists.

Edwards' reply to this last statement is that he had never read Mr. Hobbes, and that it was no refutation of his doctrine to point out that it agreed in some respects with those whose general position he opposed. He is also quick to call attention to the rather glaring oversight of Whitby, and his fellow Arminians, in failing to show how necessity can be consistent with moral accountability in God, Christ, and the angels, but not consistent with it in man. "It were to be wished", he writes, "that Dr. Whitby, and other divines of the same sort, had explained themselves, when they^{have} asserted that that which is necessary, is not deserving of praise; at the same time that they have owned God's perfection to be necessary, and so in effect representing God as not deserving praise." ³⁸

Whitby does not go deeply into the psychology of volition, and in his psychology he does not begin to compare with Edwards. The free will of man, he says, is "a faculty or power." ³⁹ At another place he quotes with high approval a Mr. Thorndike, who speaks of freedom as "indifference". Man may be influenced by ideas and motives presented through his understanding, but the will possesses the sovereign power to resist this influence in making its choices. It can thus resist the persuasions brought to bear on it by the divine grace. Habits may exert great pressure on the will, but they cannot determine its actions. Whitby does not con-

³⁸Jonathan Edwards, Enquiry, Works, Vol. I, p. 256.

³⁹Whitby, op. cit., p. 266.

cede that any acts of man's will are determined. His conception of volition, then, is that it is the act of the will, a "faculty or power", which in its acts is isolated from the rest of the self, from its character and intellect, its motives and habits. In particular, the acts of the will are independent of the influence of motives. There were some divergencies from this view among the Arminian writers whom Edwards read,- Dr. Samuel Clarke identified the act of will with the "last dictate of the understanding", and Mr. Chubb undertook to assert at once the determining power of motives and the freedom of the will, an inconsistency which Edwards mercilessly exposed,- but Whitby's was the general view among Arminian thinkers. In giving expression to this view some of them spoke of man's freedom as consisting in a self-determining power in the will, an expression which, as we shall see, Edwards attacks again and again. Others used an even more vulnerable phrase, describing man's freedom as consisting in a will in equilibrium before all external and internal motives or influences. Whitby, although he says once that the will "determines itself", on the whole avoids both these forms of expression, limiting himself to an approval of the term 'indifference' as characterizing the will. All these various expressions, however, are efforts to set forth the same fundamental notion, that of a will not determined in any respect, spontaneously originating its own choices between ^{open} possibilities. The liberty for which the Arminian contended was thus not a liberty of the self, but strictly a liberty of the will.

After establishing his position on the freedom of the will, Whitby discusses the Calvinistic doctrine of the perseverance of the saints. He is willing to recognize, he states, that those who are preserved from falling from grace are so preserved by the power of God through faith; but he knows of no promise of God that all true believers will be so preserved. What God has promised is that those who do not wickedly depart from Him will be preserved from being forced from Him by their adversaries, not that their own faith will certainly prove steadfast. In short, all will persevere who use the means to it, but not all true believers are certain to use the means. This position is argued at length from Scripture, and like Whitby's other views, is supported by appeals to the Fathers. It is, of course, the only position that can be taken consistently with his other Arminian theories.

Having presented his own view, Whitby refers to the objection against it that it undermines the comfort of Christians and takes away an aid to holiness. As to the comfort to be derived from the belief in perseverance, he observes that, according to the Scripture, true peace and comfort arise only from an upright conscience and that we lose it only when we forsake the way of righteousness. Further, he says, the fact that a doctrine is comforting does not guarantee its truth. Again, the possibility of falling into evil should not be a source of discomfort to one who knows that "he cannot fall into it unless he will, and chuseth so to do, and unless he acts contrary to all the rules of reason and dis-

cretion, and the strongest motives and sufficient means vouchsafed to avoid it." ⁴⁰ As a matter of fact, he argues, there is equally as much comfort in the Arminian, as in the Calvinistic view on this doctrine, for two reasons: (1) even if a man believes in certain perseverance, he can never be certain of his sincerity, and, therefore, of his own perseverance, and (2) no theological beliefs can remove the fears arising from an enlightened Christian conscience. It will thus not make any difference which view is held, as far as the comfort to be derived from it is concerned. And as to the effect on our holiness, to feel certain of salvation is far more likely to promote indulgence and moral laxity than to feel ourselves on probation.

Whitby concludes his Discourse with an effort to answer certain other objections to his system. The most important criticism dealt with, and the only one relevant to our purposes, is that most of the arguments against absolute decrees hold also against divine prescience. He answers that God's foreknowledge has no influence upon our actions, whereas His decrees infallibly produce the action. Since God's foreknowledge extends to all possible actions, as well as those which actually are to come to pass, He foresees an act as one to be freely committed. He is thus cleared of any direct responsibility for the act. How God can foreknow free actions, Whitby admits he does not know, but he reminds

⁴⁰ Whitby, op. cit., p. 393.

us that such foreknowledge is a plain teaching of Scripture and is thus not to be rejected merely because we are ignorant of how it takes place.

In this resumé of Whitby's teaching we have a picture of the system of thought Edwards opposed in his deterministic writings. To him it was utterly subversive of fundamental Christian truths, particularly of that essential doctrine, the sovereignty of God. The spread of Arminianism caused him the greatest distress, and became, in reality, the occasion of the works which are the primary study of this thesis.

PART II

DETERMINISM IN THE SYSTEM OF JONATHAN EDWARDS

CHAPTER IV

THE HEART OF EDWARDS' THEOLOGY

"The doctrines of God's absolute sovereignty, and free grace, in shewing mercy to whom he would shew mercy; and man's absolute dependence on the operations of God's Holy Spirit, have very often appeared to me as sweet and glorious doctrines. These doctrines have been much my delight. God's sovereignty has ever appeared to me, great part of his glory. It has often been my delight to approach God, and adore him as a sovereign God, and ask sovereign mercy of him."¹ Edwards' thought began and ended in the sovereignty of God. It was the heart, the focal point of his entire theological system. There was never a time when he did not think of God as absolute, either as Absolute Mind or as Absolute Will. George Park Fisher writes as follows: "The fundamental principle in the philosophical and religious system of Edwards is the doctrine of the Absolute. The existence and necessary existence of a Being, eternal, infinite and omnipotent, a being self-conscious, yet not dependent for self-consciousness on aught exterior to Himself, was propounded with emphasis in the youthful essay, the title of which is 'Being'.

¹Jonathan Edwards,
Quoted by Samuel Hopkins, op. cit., p. 37.

This principle was ever after the groundwork of his teaching. In his mind God was the supreme and absorbing object of contemplation and study. His supremacy, the independence of His being and perfections, was the groundwork of his creed. The 'sovereignty' of God he insisted on and emphasized."² The same idea is emphasized by a recent writer: "To one cardinal principle Edwards was faithful - the conception of the majesty and sufficiency of God; and this polar idea provides the clue to both his philosophical and theological systems."³ To quote once more: "What Being was to Parmenides and Plato, what the one Substance was to Spinoza, what the Absolute was to Hegel, God was to Edwards."⁴

To Edwards God's sovereignty meant His predetermination of all things. It never occurred to him that one might deny universal determinism without denying divine sovereignty. He conceived of God's relation to the acts of man's will as in harmony with His relation to the events of the natural world. No volition takes place except as the result of God's decree. Whether he was led, as a result of this view, to teach that God was essentially arbitrary will, is a mooted point which will be discussed later. There is no ground for doubt, however, that in accepting the doctrine of sovereignty, he was accepting the principle of universal determinism. This is the most obvious fact in his theolog-

² George Park Fisher, An Unpublished Essay of Edwards on the Trinity, With Remarks on Edwards and his Theology, p. 31.

³ Vernon Louis Parrington, Main Currents in American Thought, Vol. I, The Colonial Mind, p. 152.

⁴ George A. Gordon, in Jonathan Edwards, a Retrospect, p. 59.

ical works.

To say that his thought began with this notion of God's sovereignty is to state the literal truth. We have seen that he always believed Calvinism to be the truth, and Calvinism to him was essentially the sovereignty of God. He never went back of this conception. It was the major premise of his thought. "The foundations of this cardinal principle in his theology", says A.V.G.Allen, "seem to be sunk in an abysmal darkness, which he makes no attempt to sound."⁵ In his own account of his reconciliation to the doctrine of sovereignty, Edwards states that he never could tell how, or by what means, he was convinced of its truth. It was simply his underlying assumption, the rational foundation of which he never knew nor sought to learn. He does indeed present valid and acute arguments in defense of this great doctrine, arguments which have justly elicited the admiration of generations, but they carry in them an unmistakable flavor of special pleading. One has the feeling in studying them that they are not the reasons which led Edwards himself to accept the doctrine, however much they may have strengthened his conviction after he had once made it his own.

The genesis of Edwards' faith in the doctrine of universal determinism contrasts interestingly with that of Augustine and Calvin. In the case of these older thinkers the dogma grew out of a religious experience and was ground-

⁵Alexander V.G.Allen, Life and Writings of Jonathan Edwards, p. 60.

ed in certain fundamental values. Their starting point was the experience of unmerited~~/~~grace (and with Calvin, also the desire for assurance), and the doctrine of sovereignty, involving universal predestination, was postulated as the implication of this experience. It was thus with them secondary to the belief in free grace and the desire for assurance. With the authors of the Canons of Dort and of the Westminster Confession, however, sovereignty, as expressed in the divine decrees, was taken practically for its own sake. Edwards followed in their footsteps. Taking the sovereignty of God, the divine decrees, as his point of departure, he developed this fundamental conception in all its ramifications throughout his entire theological system.

All his deterministic writings carry out this fundamental idea of the sovereignty of God. The various deterministic doctrines are, indeed, only the manifestations of this basic principle. His zeal for establishing it, as we have seen, was stimulated by the spread of Arminianism, which cut at its roots with the assertion of man's power of contrary choice. Should Arminianism carry the day, and God's sovereignty be repudiated, he felt that all of value in religion would be lost. "The danger, the evil he deprecated, was this, that men would think God had left the world to take care of itself, or that without God's aid they could accomplish their salvation."⁶ Thus the motive in all

⁶ Alexander V.G. Allen, in Jonathan Edwards; A Retrospect, (Norman Gardiner, Ed.), p. 28.

his deterministic works was apologetic, and none of them can be regarded as a dispassionate investigation of the subject with which it deals. This fact is recognized even by his most admiring biographers, such for instance as Henry Rogers, who remarks that the Enquiry was written for the purpose of refuting Arminianism, and must be viewed, along with all the works of Edwards, "in relation to the peculiarities of that (the Arminian) system, and as far as Edwards' intention goes, to them alone."⁷ "The essay on the Freedom of the Will", says John De Witt, "is essentially a polemic, and only incidentally a constructive treatise. As a polemic, therefore, it must be judged."⁸ This Enquiry and the Treatise on Original Sin, the two greatest of Edwards' deterministic works, were written during the passion engendered by his banishment from Northampton, a banishment which Edwards traced, in its final analysis, to the influence of Arminianism, as he implied in his Farewell Sermon. In these works his deep seated intellectual conviction was thus abetted by a strong personal feeling.

The idea of God as sovereign bears a close affinity to Edwards' earlier philosophical idealism. In both his theology and his philosophy the absoluteness of God is primary, the difference being that in his theology God is thought of as Absolute Will, whereas in his philosophy He

⁷ Henry Rogers, Essay on the Genius and Writings of Jonathan Edwards, in The Works of Jonathan Edwards, ed. by Edward Hickman, Vol. I, p. xxi.

⁸ John DeWitt, Jonathan Edwards: A Study, in Princeton Theological Review, II, January 1904, p. 105.

is thought of as Absolute Mind. To shift from his philosophy to his theology by the feature of absoluteness common to both of them was thus very easy, and there is nothing in Edwards' writings to indicate that he felt he was making a transition from one to another type of thought when he moved from philosophy into theology. Indeed, there are indications that he retained his early philosophical views all through his theological career.

Some debate has centered around the question whether Edwards' idea of the absoluteness of God involved pantheism. Among certain recent writers, in particular, the tendency has been to interpret him as basically pantheistic,⁹ or as inconsistently holding a pantheistic philosophy in conjunction with Calvinistic theism.¹⁰

The attribution of pantheism to Edwards is certainly not groundless. He was innately a mystic, as is evident throughout his Diary and on many a page of his other writings. His statements about his mystic experiences, it has been said, reveal a "naïve and unreflecting pantheism." In both his earliest and latest writings he uses language which identifies God and the world. In the youthful Notes on the Mind he says: "Hence we learn how properly it may be said, that God is, and that there is none else."¹¹ He remarks further that God "is the Infinite, Universal and All-comprehending,

⁹ Cf. Frederick Ives Carpenter, The Radicalism of Jonathan Edwards, in New England Quarterly, October 1931.

¹⁰ Cf. A.C. McGiffert, Jr., Jonathan Edwards, pp 180-183.

¹¹ Jonathan Edwards, Notes on the Mind, in Works, Edited by S. E. Dwight, Vol. I, p. 688.

Existence....He is in himself, if I may say so, an Infinite Quantity of Existence."¹² A little later he writes as follows: "Seeing God has so plainly revealed himself to us; and other minds are made in his image, and are emanations from him; we may judge what is the Excellence of other minds, by what is his, which we have shown is Love."¹³ It is probably going too far to say with H. Norman Gardiner¹⁴ that the whole trend of Edwards' thought in his early writings is toward a comprehensive idealism which makes God all in all, for there are many non-pantheistic elements in the Notes on the Mind. But that the pantheistic conception is prominent cannot be denied.

In Edwards' posthumous work, God's Chief End in Creation, the idea of God as the sum total of existence and the world as an emanation from Him again appears. God is sometimes spoken of as an expansive substance: "Therefore, to speak strictly according to truth, we may suppose, that a disposition in God, as an original property of his nature, to an emanation of his own infinite fulness, was what excited him to create the world; and so, that the emanation itself was aimed at by him as a last end of the creation."¹⁵

Later we find this remarkable passage: "But now, with respect

¹² Edwards, Notes on the Mind, ut supra, p. 698.

¹³ ibid, p. 699.

¹⁴ Cf. H. Norman Gardiner, The Early Idealism of Edwards, in Jonathan Edwards: A Retrospect.

¹⁵ Jonathan Edwards, God's Chief End in Creation, Works, Vol. I, p. 460. (See Bibliography for full title.)

to the divine Being, there is no such thing as confined selfishness in him, or a love to himself opposite to general benevolence. It is impossible, because he comprehends all entity, and all excellence, in his own essence. The eternal and infinite Being, is in effect, Being in general; and comprehends universal existence. God, in his benevolence to his creatures, cannot have his heart enlarged, in such a manner as to take in beings who are originally out of himself, distinct and independent. This cannot be in an infinite being, who exists alone from eternity." ¹⁶ Erich

Voegelin sees this posthumously published work as the culmination of the pantheistic tendency exhibited in Edwards' early philosophical writings. "In den Jugendwerken halten sich die mystischen Erlebnisse und die auf ihnen ruhende Philosophie innerhalb der typischen Bewegung vom Prädestinationsglauben zur persönlichen Versicherung der Auswahl; in den letzten Werken scheint dieser Zusammenhang durchbrochen zu sein: die pantheistische Mystik ist selbständig geworden, sie ist nicht mehr ein Moment im Seelenbeben des Puritaners, sondern hat die calvinistische Dogmatik im Herzen aufgegeben (wenn auch nicht dem Wort nach) und findet die Mitte des religiösen Lebens in der Verbindung mit Gott. Nicht mehr Christus vermittelt die Gewissheit der göttlichen Auswahl, sondern der eine ungeteilte Gott selbst strömt aus in die Welt und umfasst uns als einen

¹⁶ Edwards, God's Chief End in Creation, Works, Vol. I, p. 479.

Teil seiner selbst."¹⁷

The pantheistic elements in God's Chief End in Creation and the Notes on the Mind speak for themselves. Edwards' belief in universal necessity also lends itself easily to the pantheistic type of thought. In spite of these things, however, it is a misinterpretation to adjudge him a pantheist. In the Notes on the Mind there are quite as many passages which distinguish God and the world, God and the creature, as there are which identify them. The dissertation on God's Chief End in Creation, it is true, asserts that God aims at His own glory, the expression of His own attributes, and in the elaboration of this idea pantheistic language is natural. But it is incorrect to say that the essay's fundamental theme involves an identification of God and the world. Here, as in the Notes on the Mind, Edwards speaks on every page of God's creating the world in time, an idea opposed to that of eternal emanation, and he is continually distinguishing God and the creature. He makes it clear that God's end in creation must be something distinct from His own existence. "Thus God's existence and infinite perfection, though infinitely valuable in themselves, cannot be supposed to be the end of any divine operation; for we cannot conceive of them as, in any respect, consequent on any works of God."¹⁸ Joseph Haroutunian is right in saying that Edwards "never

¹⁷Erich Voegelin, Ueber die Form des Amerikanischen Geistes, p. 111.

¹⁸Jonathan Edwards, God's Chief End in Creation, Works, Vol. I, p. 452.

fails to distinguish between God and the world."¹⁹ Except for the cases noted above, there is no suggestion of pantheism in his works. On the other hand, the personality of God, and the reality of sin and of individual responsibility are fundamental themes of his preaching and writing.

In view of the fact that Edwards approached his deterministic system through the fundamental notion of God as sovereign, the Predestiner of all things, rather than through one of its more specialized forms of expression, such for instance as the doctrine of efficacious grace, the logical and natural point at which to begin the study of his determinism is with the doctrine of the decrees, which contains his teaching on sovereignty in its most generalized form. After studying the decrees, we shall move on to his teaching in regard to volition, in order to see the implications of his conception of God's sovereignty for human freedom. With this as a background we shall take up his doctrine of original sin, where he deals with the possibility and results of sin's entry into the world. We shall then be prepared for a study of his teaching on grace, and, following that, for an examination of his doctrine of perseverance.

¹⁹ Joseph Haroutunian, Jonathan Edwards, A Study in Godliness, in Journal of Religion, Vol. XI, July 1931, p. 413.

CHAPTER V

THE DIVINE DECREES

We find references to the doctrine of the decrees scattered through Edwards' works, particularly in the Enquiry. But there is one rather brief essay with the title, Concerning the Divine Decrees in General, and Election in Particular, the date of which is not exactly known, from which we glean most of our knowledge of his teaching on this important subject. The essay, as we have called it, is in reality only a series of disconnected remarks which he had presumably contemplated organizing into a treatise. Its paragraphs, however, were left in complete disorder, and it is only with difficulty that a systematic statement can be extracted from them. It gives no evidence of Edwards' power of ingenious and sustained argument which is so markedly exhibited in his treatises on the will and on original sin. Nevertheless, in spite of these difficulties, it furnishes sufficient material to enable us to exhibit his teaching on the decrees in incomplete form.

I. The Decrees in General

Edwards devoted a good deal of discussion to the decrees in general. To begin with, he explains that God's decreeing anything is the same as God's willing that thing. "Now, it is self-evident, that if He knows all things before hand, He either doth approve of them or He doth not approve of them; that is, He either is willing that they should be, or He is not willing that they should be. But to will that they should be is to decree them..."¹ (God's "being willing" that a thing should happen and His willing it to take place are, for Edwards, the same.) He takes the position also that God's decreeing or willing a thing is in reality the same as His act in the execution of the decree, with the distinction that the decree is the act with respect to future time. The decree and its execution, thus, differ only relatively.

Every single event which ever has taken place, or will, is decreed by God, according to Edwards. Other Calvinistic theologians have regarded Adam as possessed of a real power of contrary choice. Not so Edwards. Adam's will, he taught, was determined by his holy nature and thus, in the last analysis, by God's will, in precisely the same manner in which our wills are determined by our nature. As we shall see, he regards us as possessing all the freedom conceivable, and yet all our acts are necessary. This assertion that all

¹Jonathan Edwards, Concerning the Divine Decrees, Works, Vol. VIII, p. 351.

our acts are necessary reveals a further difference between Edwards and many other deterministic theologians, for they often taught, as did Augustine, that man has the power of contrary choice except in regard to the acceptance of Christ. To Edwards everything in nature and man is under the sway of necessity, i.e., all is decreed by the will of God.

The decrees in Edwards' view are absolute. That is to say, they are not conditioned upon foresight of anything in the creature. "It is commonly said, God decrees nothing upon a foresight of any thing in the creature; as this, they say, argues imperfection in God; and so it does, taken in the sense that they commonly intend it..."² The Arminian notion of conditional decrees is of course unacceptable to Edwards because it involves the belief that the creature's acts in reality are not decreed. That the decrees are absolute is revealed also in the fact that there is no temporal sequence in them. Priority in time would imply a subordination of one decree to another, which is incompatible with the idea of absoluteness.

In connection with the absoluteness of God's decrees, a question of cardinal importance arises. Did, or did not, Edwards teach that God exercises a naked sovereignty, an arbitrary will, above, and independent of, His character? There is no doubt but that, in some of his earlier works, he did. As A.V.G.Allen remarks: "One ruling principle of his

²Edwards, Concerning the Divine Decrees, Works, Vol. VIII, p. 356.

career as a practical theologian was the Augustinian idea of God as absolute and arbitrary will."³ This position was taken in the sermon, God's Sovereignty in the Salvation of Men. In regard to man's salvation he there remarks that "it is God's mere will and sovereign pleasure which supremely orders this affair. It is the divine will without restraint, or constraint, or obligation."⁴ God has a perfect right "to dispose of all his creatures according to his mere pleasure."⁵ He can bestow salvation on the vilest sinner, if He chooses, and withhold it from the best of men. Nothing outside Himself, and no principles within Him can lay any trammel upon this perfect liberty. "If it would in itself be prejudicial to any of his attributes to bestow or refuse salvation, then God would not in that matter act as absolutely sovereign, because it then ceases to be a merely arbitrary thing."⁶ No statement could make clearer the independence of the divine will from the divine character. This same stress on God as will is apparent in Edwards' sermon, God Glorified in Man's Dependence. There are also some scattering statements in the remarks, Concerning the Divine Decrees, to the effect that God's sovereign acts must be accepted, even though they cannot be reconciled with His character, thus implying that His "mere good pleasure" is the final arbiter of His conduct.

This position, however, is set aside in Edwards' later

³ Alexander V.G. Allen, Life and Writings of Jonathan Edwards, p. 20.

⁴ Jonathan Edwards, God's Sovereignty in the Salvation of Men, Works, Vol. X, p. 202.

⁵ *ibid*, p. 203.

⁶ *ibid*, p. 204.

theological development, and the contradictory notion of God's will as directed by His wisdom and holiness takes its place. The bulk of the teaching in his remarks, Concerning the Divine Decrees, bears this out. Each decree, he says, fits into an harmonious scheme of the decrees. "What we mean", he writes, "we completely express thus - That God decrees all things harmoniously, and in excellent order, one thing harmonizes with another, and there is such a relation between all the decrees, as makes the most excellent order." ⁷ Each decree is made with its relationship to the others in view. "But nobody, I believe, will deny but that God decrees many things that he would not have decreed, if he had not foreknown and foredetermined such and such other things." ⁸ In the achievement of this harmony some decrees, or parts of decrees, are "prior" to the others, - prior not in a temporal sense but in logical order. The harmony and the logical order obtaining among them implies that they are made in accordance with God's wisdom and character, there being a reason or justification for each. "God has regard to conditions in his decrees, as he has regard to a wise order and connection of things. Such is his wisdom in his decrees, and all his acts and operations, that, if it were not for wise connection that is regarded, many things would not be decreed." ⁹ And just before this remark we have the explicit statement that God elects wisely and with regard to

⁷ Edwards, Concerning the Divine Decrees, Works, Vol. VIII,
⁸ *ibid*, p. 356. /p. 356.

⁹ *ibid*, p. 380.

the common good. This insistence upon the harmony and wisdom of the decrees is clearly inconsistent with the position that they are fiats of an arbitrary will.

Whenever Edwards defends the doctrine of the decrees against criticism, he does so by showing that the ends to which the decrees are directed are ethically unimpeachable. Those decrees which he feels seem to reflect discredit on God's character, and thus to imply a naked sovereignty, are never said to be ends in themselves, but always only means to more ultimate, morally justifiable ends. For instance, God's vindictive justice is a means, not an end. His permission of sin is a means rather than an end in itself, and can be justified only because it presumably redounds to the greatest good.

The question might be raised as to whether the fundamental or ultimate decrees are not held by Edwards to be arbitrary. There are two such decrees which he speaks of as relating to "mere or ultimate" ends, namely, the decree of God to glorify His love and communicate His goodness, and the decree to glorify His holiness and greatness. These decrees, relating to "mere and ultimate" ends, are not conditioned on any prior decree, but are themselves prior not only to the decree of the fall of man, but even to his creation. Being ends in themselves, they cannot be justified in the same way as those which are a means to the working out of another decree. It will be noticed, however, that in both these cases (with the exception of the design of glorifying His greatness) the decree is a decree to give

expression to God's moral attributes. It is, therefore, an act of will which is in accordance with His character. As to the decree to glorify His greatness, while it is not directed to the expression of a moral attribute, and while it is a "mere and ultimate" decree, it is nevertheless, according to Edwards, in harmony with the other decrees which are aimed at moral ends, and must therefore be morally justifiable.

In the two great works toward the close of his career, the Enquiry into the Freedom of the Will and the Treatise on Original Sin, the position that God's will is in harmony with His wisdom and character is strongly emphasized. Both works show Edwards trying to vindicate God's actions in the permission of sin, election, etc., at the bar of ethics. Both contain specific assertions that God is not essentially an arbitrary will, but rather a moral governor. In the Enquiry, for instance, we have the following statement: "God's actions, and particularly those which he exerts as a moral governor, have moral qualifications, and are morally good in the highest degree. They are most perfectly holy and righteous; and we must conceive of Him as influenced in the highest degree, by that which, above all others, is properly a moral inducement; viz the moral good which He sees in such and such things."¹⁰ In the Treatise on Original Sin Edwards speaks of God's identification of us and Adam in the first sin as arbitrary, and then follows with this

¹⁰Jonathan Edwards, Enquiry, Works, Vol. I, p. 155.

statement: "When I call this an arbitrary constitution, I mean, that it is a constitution which depends on nothing but the divine will; which divine will depends on nothing but the divine wisdom."¹¹ Most significant of all, however, as we shall later see, is the fact that the determination of God's will by His holy nature and His wisdom is a prominent teaching of the Enquiry. God's will, Edwards there asserts, is no more free than ours, but must always follow the divine inclination.

It thus appears that there are two conflicting viewpoints in Edwards' thought on the matter of the divine will, but that the conception of it as moral, rather than arbitrary, is more extensively taught and is the position of his later and maturer works. We need have no hesitancy in identifying this as his real view. He is one with the Calvin of The Agreement with the Genevese Pastors, his accord with the Calvin of the Institutes being only a passing phase of his intellectual career. He was, as Winfield Burggraaff¹² points out, swayed from the stricter and purer Calvinism by his longing to make Christianity reasonable, and by the desire to meet the attacks made on Calvinism by the Arminians in the name of morality.

The doctrine that God's decrees are not mere arbitrary fiats, but acts dictated by wisdom and holiness, and thus

¹¹ Jonathan Edwards, The Great Christian Doctrine of Original Sin Defended, Works, Vol. II, p. 356.

¹² Winfield Burggraaff, The Rise and Development of Liberal Theology in America, p. 121.

directed to worthy ends, suggests that God has a supreme purpose in His decrees. It is appropriate that we ask at this point what that purpose, according to Edwards, is. In his essay on God's Chief End in Creation he approaches the question both through reason and Scripture, reaching the conclusion that God's one ultimate purpose is His own glory. "Thus we see that the great end of God's works, which is so variously expressed in Scripture, is indeed but One; and this one end is most properly and comprehensively called The Glory Of God."¹³ This is in keeping with the position in his Dissertation on the Nature of True Virtue, where he says that God should be the object of His own greatest love, inasmuch as He possesses the greatest share of existence and of moral excellence. "From hence also it is evident, that the divine virtue, or the virtue of the divine mind, must consist primarily in love to himself."¹⁴ The glory of God is "the emanation and true external expression of God's internal glory and fulness."¹⁵ It includes "the exercise of God's perfections to produce a proper effect....the manifestation of his internal glory to created understandings... the communication of the infinite fulness of God to the creature...the creature's high esteem of God, love to Him, and the complacence and joy in Him; and the proper exercises and expressions of these."¹⁶

¹³ Edwards, God's Chief End in Creation, Works, Vol. I, p. 528.

¹⁴ Edwards, A Dissertation Concerning the Nature of True Virtue, Works, Vol. II, p. 23.

¹⁵ Edwards, God's Chief End in Creation, Works, Vol. I, p. 526.

¹⁶ ibid, pp 526-527.

While holding that God's chief and ultimate end is His own glory, Edwards is at great pains to explain that this involves the creature's good and happiness. It is a mistake, he declares, to view God's glory and the good of the creature as "properly and entirely distinct." Were we capable of more perfect views of God and divine things, we should see that these things, instead of appearing entirely distinct, are implied in one another. "God, in seeking his glory, seeks the good of his creatures; because the emanation of his glory (which he seeks and delights in, as he delights in himself and his own external glory) implies the communicated excellency and happiness of his creatures."¹⁷ Edwards, however, is thinking only of those creatures who are elect. Nowhere in the discussion of the chief end for which God created the world does he speak of those whose lot is not to enjoy God's communicated blessings, but rather to remain eternal objects of His wrath. In fact, in elucidating the meaning of God's seeking His own glory, he does not speak of the glorifying of His justice as involved. The whole stress is in God's love, benevolence, knowledge, etc.,- those attributes whose expression would enhance the virtue and happiness of man. When he comes to discuss the specific decrees, which are the most concrete expressions of the activity by which God seeks His glory, the difficulty introduced by the decree of reprobation arises. When this decree is considered, it becomes apparent that God's seeking His glory

¹⁷ Edwards, God's Chief End in Creation, Works, Vol. I, p.477.

involves the good and happiness of some of His creatures but by no means of all of them.

II. The Divine Decrees and Human Sin

That the doctrine of the decrees ascribes to God the decreeing of sin Edwards is quite ready to grant. True, it is by a permissive decree that sin takes place, but this does not obviate the fact that it is decreed. "If God wills to permit a thing that it may come to pass, then he wills that it should come to pass."¹⁸ Edwards does not stop with the simple recognition that sin is inevitably part of a doctrine of unconditional decrees. He even brings forward a number of more specific arguments in proof of the divine authorship of sin. God must will sin and the refusal of Christ, he says, because, foreseeing who would sin, He could have refused to give being to him. This is of course a favorite argument of the determinist and there is a certain amount of truth in it. If we grant God's foreknowledge of human actions, we cannot deny that He is ultimately responsible in some sense for sin in the world, seeing He is responsible for the world. But we touch the nerve of the matter only when we ask whether to grant this is to concede God's decreeing of sin. Edwards replies in the affirmative, thereby assuming the deterministic position that to permit sin is to decree it. His Arminian opponents would reply in the negative and insist that God's responsibility consists

only in His making sin possible, - that His permission of it is quite different from His decreeing it. The argument is thus not independent, but derives its force from the strength of the deterministic position as a whole, which is precisely the question at stake. This same general criticism may be made of two other arguments Edwards brings forward. In the first of these he reasons that God could have willed that all men should be perfect without infringing ~~upon~~ their liberty, because He has actually done this in the case of the angels and saints in heaven, and of those He has decreed to accept Christ and be saved. Here he is obviously assuming the truth of determinism. The other argument runs as follows: God has decreed His own acts and therefore His punishment of sin from all eternity; but if so, the sin to be punished must be certain, and therefore necessary. Here the deterministic presupposition is that certain foreknowledge of an act implies its determination. We can deal with the questions involved in these assumptions more properly later on.

The most significant thing in regard to God's relation to the existence of sin is Edwards' teaching that His moral attributes, as well as His natural, require the decreeing of sin. Sin is necessary, he says, in order that "the shining forth of God's glory should be complete."¹⁹ If God's holiness in the hatred of sin and His majesty and justice in

¹⁹ Edwards, Concerning the Divine Decrees, Works, Vol. VIII, p. 358.

the punishment of it are to be revealed, sin must come into existence. "Thus it is necessary, that God's awful majesty, his authority and dreadful greatness, justice and holiness, should be manifested. But this could not be, unless punishment has been decreed."²⁰ Similarly God's love can be manifested at its highest only in the pardoning of sin, and His goodness properly appreciated only in contrast to it. "There would be no manifestation of God's grace or true goodness, if there was no sin to be pardoned, no misery to be saved from. How much happiness soever he bestowed, his goodness would not be so much prized and admired, and the sense of it not so great."²¹ This completer revelation of God's attributes will also redound to the greater happiness of the creature, "because the creature's happiness consists in the knowledge of God, and a sense of his love."²² Thus the decreeing of sin is justified because it serves good ends. And only in such cases is it permitted, God restraining it when a good is not in view.

Edwards expressly denies that the good is ever that of upholding freedom in the creature. "If he permits it for the sake of that good, then he does not permit it merely because he would infringe on the creature's liberty in restraining it, as is further evident, because he does restrain it when that good is not in view."²³ In the final analysis it is never creaturely good that God has primarily

²⁰ Edwards, Concerning the Divine Decrees, Works, Vol. VIII, p. 358.

²¹ *ibid*, pp 358-359.

²² *ibid*, p. 359.

²³ *ibid*, pp 359-360.

in view in permitting sin, but always the "shining forth of his own glory." The good that comes to the creature comes as a corollary to this. Edwards' position here is thus in effect that sin is only a "seeming". To hold that sin is decreed, but only for good ends, is in the final analysis to deny the evil of sin, to deny that sin is sin.

While Edwards makes it clear beyond all doubt that God decrees sin, he conceives of God's relation to the sin He decrees as different from that to the good He decrees. The elect Christian has no merit for his good; but the non-elect sinner is responsible for his sin. The distinction between God's relation to decreed sin and decreed good is that the former only is decreed permissively. And to say that God decrees sin by permitting it is not to say that He produces or commits sin. "I do not argue, that God may commit evil, that good may come of it; but that he may permit that it come to pass, that good may come of it."²⁴ If God produced or committed sin, Edwards admits, His character could not be cleared. "It is in itself absolutely evil, for any being to commit evil, that good may come of it."²⁵ By virtue of the permissive character of the decree of sin, then, God does not directly produce it, and He is thus free from blame.

There is a difference, Edwards conceives, between God's committing sin and permitting it, even when the latter means causing it to be by an inevitable pre-determination. To the

²⁴ Edwards, Concerning the Divine Decrees, Works, Vol. VIII,
²⁵ ibid, p. 386. /p. 386.

indeterminist this distinction is entirely specious: for God to decree sin is for Him to will it, as Edwards himself insists, and to will it is to commit it. So he reasons, and thus denies that the determinist has any right to use the term, permit, to characterize God's relation to sin. Edwards himself vacillates somewhat on this question. When he is trying to prove the doctrine of the decrees, he insists that God's causation of sinful acts in the creature is the same as His causation of good acts. But when he is defending the character of God against the implications of this view, he has recourse to the distinction between the permissive and the non-permissive decrees. This distinction is made use of in his account of the fall, and we shall see when we come to study the latter just what is meant by God's "permitting" sin.

III. Predestination, Election, and Reprobation

Edwards uses the term, predestination, to designate God's total will with regard to man. As a matter of fact he employs the word very little (only four times in his remarks, Concerning the Decrees) and gives no definition of the exact meaning he attaches to it. We can see, however, in the following quotation, that he uses it to indicate the all-inclusive decree relating to human beings. "Hence we may learn, how much in the decree of predestination ~~is~~to be considered as prior to the creation and fall of man, and how much as posterior; viz. that God's decree to glorify his love and communicate his goodness, and to glorify his greatness and

holiness, is to be considered as prior to creation and the fall of man."²⁶ Predestination thus includes God's decree to glorify His love and communicate His goodness and the decree to glorify His holiness and greatness; and we have seen that these are the fundamental decrees. All the others are subordinate decrees or parts of these. Hence, the decree of predestination covers all God's dealings with men, and, it is to be noted, includes the decree of reprobation.

The first of the two major parts of the/d ecree of predestination, namely, the decree of God to glorify His love and communicate His goodness, is accomplished by the decree of election. In this God decrees to bestow happiness on certain fallen creatures, and thereby to glorify His mercy and grace. On one occasion Edwards uses language which suggests that he conceives of the decree of election as subsequent to the/d ecree of glorifying God's mercy and grace. His general usage, however, indicates that he treats these as in reality one decree or as coordinate decrees. "The first things in order in this decree are, that God will communicate his happiness, and glorify his grace; (for these two seem to be coordinate.)" ²⁷

This decree, it is clearly stated, is not an end in itself. The bestowal of happiness and the glorification of God's mercy and grace is the means by which God's love is glorified and His goodness communicated. Here we have an

²⁶ Edwards, Concerning the Divine Decrees, Works, Vol. VIII,
²⁷ ^{ibid}, p. 381. /p. 383.

illustration of how one decree, which is the end, may be "prior" in God's mind, to that decree which is the means of attaining it. The place of election in the order of the decrees is emphasized by Edwards. While, as we have seen, God's decree to glorify His love and communicate His goodness is prior even to the creation of man, the decree of election presupposes not only the being but also the sin of man. "And the decree of election, as it implies a decree of glorifying God's mercy and grace, considers men as being cursed and fallen; because the very notion of such a decree supposes sin and misery."²⁸ On the other hand, the decree of election does not presuppose faith and good works. "God, in the decree of election, is justly to be considered as decreeing the creature's eternal happiness, antecedently to any foresight of good works."²⁹ For there is nothing, he goes on to explain, in the notion of God's communicating His own happiness nor in the notion of grace which necessarily implies faith or good works.

Elsewhere, however, he has this to say: "...both God's act, and also his decree of bestowing salvation on such a fallen creature, is, in some respects, grounded on God's act and decree of giving faith....Indeed, the salvation of an elect soul is, in this respect, grounded on the decree of giving faith, as God's decree of bestowing happiness on the elect in this particular way."³⁰ This seems to mean that

²⁸ Edwards, Concerning the Divine Decrees, Works, Vol. VIII,
²⁹ *ibid*, p. 380. /p. 383.
³⁰ *ibid*, p. 385.

while salvation is not necessarily grounded on faith, as punishment is/on sin, it is nevertheless based on it in some sense, since God has chosen to make it the condition of salvation. If this leaves Edwards' teaching on this particular point somewhat obscure, it is only a part of the general difficulty which attaches to his teaching as to the order of the/decrees. We shall discuss this difficulty later on.

It will be noticed that in his doctrine of the place of election in the order of the decrees, Edwards is attempting to show that God's act in election is justified because it reveals His mercy and grace and thus glorifies His love and goodness. He is careful not to represent election as an end in itself. In answer to the criticism that it shows partiality in God, he replies that it is dictated by God's wisdom and by His regard for worthy ends. "Besides, unjustifiable partiality is/not imputable to a sovereign distribution of his favours, though ever so unequally, unless it be done unwisely, and so as to infringe the common good."³¹

Let us now turn to the second of the two fundamental decrees included in that of predestination, namely, the decree of God to glorify His holiness and greatness. Just as election is/the means of securing the glorification of God's love and the communication of His goodness, so by the decree of reprobation God glorifies His holiness and greatness. In

³¹ Edwards, Concerning the Divine Decrees, Works, Vol. VIII, p. 380.

reprobation He manifests His vindictive justice in the punishment of non-elect sinners with eternal misery. The idea of the wicked's proving of some value in the scheme of things by serving as the means for the expression of certain divine attributes held a strange fascination for Edwards. One of his sermons was entitled, Wicked Men Useful in Their Destruction Only, and in it he made the point that the perdition of ungodly men glorifies both God's vindictive justice and His majesty.³² In another sermon he added that God's grace is also indirectly glorified, since by the punishment of sinners, "the saints will be made the more sensible how great their salvation is."³³

Reprobation like election is not an end in itself, but a means to an end. Its relation to the end it subserves is clearly stated by Edwards. "Indeed, God's glorifying his justice, or rather his glorifying his holiness and greatness, has the place of a mere and ultimate end. But his glorifying his justice in punishing sin, (or in the exercising vindictive justice, which is the same), is not to be considered as a mere end, but a certain way or means of obtaining an end."³⁴ This means that in the order of the decrees God's glorifying of His holiness and greatness is prior to the decree of reprobation. As we have seen, God's glorifying of His holiness and greatness is prior even to the creation of

³² Edwards, Wicked Men Useful in Their Destruction Only, Works, Vol. VI, pp 542-543.

³³ Edwards, The Eternity of Hell Torments, Works, Vol. VII, p. 480.

³⁴ Edwards, Concerning the Divine Decrees, Works, Vol. VIII,

man, but the decree to reprobate, like the decree to elect, is to be thought of as posterior both to the creation and to the fall. "His having sin, is the foundation of both the fitness and possibility of justice being glorified in the punishment of his sins; and therefore, the consideration of the being of sin in the subject, must in some respect be prior in the mind of the disposer, to the determination to glorify his justice in the punishment of sin."³⁵ Edwards is here trying to make it clear that reprobation takes place in view of the creature's sinfulness. He wishes to avoid the charge that in his teaching God decrees sin because he has previously decreed the reprobation of certain individuals. Here again he is attempting to show that the decrees can each be morally justified.

This brings us naturally to the consideration of a difficulty in Edwards' idea of the order of the decrees. We have already noted that there is some ambiguity in his teaching as to the order of the decree of election and the decree to bestow faith on the elect. Another and more important difficulty arises with regard to whether the decree to permit sin is to be regarded as prior to the decrees of election and reprobation. Upon this hangs the question whether Edwards is a sublapsarian. And it has important bearings also on his effort to reconcile the decrees with the character of God.

³⁵ Edwards, Concerning the Divine Decrees, Works, Vol. VIII, p. 381.

In connection with the decree of election and reprobation, we have noted Edwards' statements that they are posterior to the decree to permit sin. But in discussing the permission of sin he justified it as necessary to the revelation of God's holiness, justice, etc., and of His love, grace, etc., that is, as a condition of securing the ends aimed at in election and reprobation. These decrees are then apparently prior to the decree permitting sin, since they are the ends for the attainment of which the permission of sin is a means. Here we have a genuine case of confusion in Edwards' thinking, and there is no way of saying what his real teaching is as to the order of these decrees.

But the trouble is deeper than the question of the order of these particular decrees. Edwards is not really clear as to what constitutes priority. A decree may be prior to another, he says, when (1) it is the end of another, or (2) it is the ground of the other's fitness for obtaining its end.³⁶ But one decree may, according to these criteria, be both prior and posterior to another. For instance, as Edwards himself says, the sinfulness of the reprobate is the ground upon which the punishment of sin is adapted to its end of glorifying God's vindictive justice. That is to say, sin is prior to reprobation according to the second criterion above. But according to the first, it is posterior, for God is said to have permitted sin that His holiness and justice might be revealed in punishing it.

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Edwards, Concerning the Divine Decrees, Works, Vol. VIII, p. 381.

The revealing of these attributes through the decree of reprobation is thus in part the end for which sin exists, and therefore the decree of reprobation is prior to the decree permitting sin.

It is probably impossible to show which of the two views Edwards really held. What is consistent is his attempt everywhere to vindicate ethically each decree, and it is this effort that has led to the difficulty. He is unable on the one hand to allow that God's permitting of sin is an end in itself, and yet, unless sin is the condition for the exercise of mercy and grace, and of vindictive justice, which, respectively, glorify God's love and goodness, and His holiness and greatness, it has no *raison d'être* except existence in its own right. On the other hand, if Edwards grants that sin is the condition of election and reprobation, etc., he is saying simply that God's attributes are such that their proper manifestation necessitates the existence of sin,- an admission at which he naturally hesitates. Neither horn of the dilemma is inviting, and yet he has no other alternative.

In view of the ambiguity in Edwards' thought as to whether the decree permitting sin is prior to the decree of reprobation, it is impossible to say whether or not he was a supralapsarian. Professor Fisher felt very decidedly that he was. "We have seen that Edwards believed in predestination in the extreme or supralapsarian form. He encloses in the iron network of philosophical necessity all intelligent

beings."³⁷ It is apparently only on the ground that Edwards regarded Adam, like the rest of us, as being completely determined in his acts, that Professor Fisher takes his position. Frank Hugh Foster, writing more recently than Fisher, speaks more guardedly of "the substantial supralapsarianism" in which Edwards had left the New England theology.³⁸ Other students of Edwards have, perhaps discreetly, avoided the problem. It deserves to be said, however, in reply to Fisher and Foster, that there is at least as much ground for regarding Edwards as a sublapsarian as for taking the opposite view. We cannot overlook the occasions upon which he specifically insists on the fact that God reprobates the non-elect in view of their sin. And this position, it should be observed, is in keeping with his efforts to show that God's decrees are morally justifiable. The fact that he regards Adam's first sin as necessary seems hardly a sufficient reason for concluding that he is a supralapsarian. Even those Calvinistic thinkers who regard Adam as free in the first sin, nevertheless consider sin an object of a divine decree. The question is thus not whether God decreed the first sin, but whether it was decreed prior to the reprobation of the non-elect. In view, then, of what can be said on both sides of the question, we can only leave the matter of Edwards' supralapsarianism an unsolved problem.

³⁷George Park Fisher, Discussions in History and Theology, p. 247.

³⁸Frank Hugh Foster, A Genetic History of the New England Theology, p. 225.

The doctrine that God decrees some individuals both to sin and to reprobation, while at the same time commanding them to be righteous and to repent, involves the Calvinistic distinction between the secret and the revealed will of God. This distinction is necessary to account for the apparent inconsistency in holding that, while all things are determined by God's will, some things come to pass apparently against His will. In his essay on the decrees Edwards expounds and defends this doctrine of the two wills in God. The term, will, he points out, is in this doctrine taken in two senses. We must distinguish between the will and the law of God, or His "will of decree" and His "will of command". (In the Enquiry he uses the terms disposing and preceptive to characterize respectively the two wills.) When we recognize this difference, "it is not difficult at all to suppose, that the one may be otherwise than the other." God's will in both cases is "in his inclination", that is, due to His nature. But His revealed Will, or "will of command", is His willing a thing "absolutely and simply considered", i.e., because it is in itself agreeable to His nature; while His secret will, the effective "will of decree", is His willing a thing "with respect to the universality of things", that is, because, while it may be in itself undesirable, it is nevertheless desirable when considered in relationship to other things.³⁹ The Enquiry makes it clear that a thing "absolutely and simply considered" is a different object from that thing

³⁹ Edwards, Concerning the Divine Decrees, Works, Vol. VIII, pp 357-358.

"with respect to the universality of things." To suppose a clash of God's wills with regard to the same object would be to ascribe an inconsistency to God. But when we recall that the objects are different, consistency itself demands that the wills be different. "There is no inconsistency in supposing, that God may hate a thing as it is in itself, and considered simply as evil, and yet that it may be his Will it should come to pass, considering all consequences." ⁴⁰

IV. Arguments Proving the Decrees

Included in his discussion of God's decrees are a few briefly stated arguments in proof of their reality. Perhaps the one to which Edwards attaches the greatest weight is based on the foreknowledge of God. That God foreknows all things he of course takes as axiomatic, and from this reasons that God must decree all things, since the foresight of a contingent event is a contradiction. God can foreknow only that which He has foreordained, and since His foresight is universal, His foreordination must be likewise. This argument is elaborated as one of the main proofs of the determination of the will in the Enquiry, and will be taken up in detail in our next chapter.

A second argument in proof of the fact that God has decreed all things rests on Edwards' conviction that a contingent event is an impossibility. Contingency, he says, is identical with chance, and for an event to come to pass by

⁴⁰ Edwards, Enquiry, Works, Vol. I, p. 386.

chance is for it to come to pass without any cause whatsoever, which is an absurdity. Everything which takes place does so as the result of a preceding cause, and this, in the last analysis, means that all events can be traced to God as the ultimate cause. We can be certain that God decrees all things^{then}, not only because the foresight of a contingent event is impossible, but also because such an event is in its^{own} nature impossible. The weak link in this reasoning is the identification of contingency with chance and thus with causelessness. As this argument must also be dealt with at length when we come to study Edwards' doctrine of the will, we shall not do more here than point out the questionable feature in it.

A third proof is very briefly touched on by Edwards, namely, the argument that if God does not decree all things, some events may take place which are inconsistent with His plan, a fact which would imply a limitation of His power. God is omnipotent, and this means that all things come to pass in accordance with His will, and therefore, to Edwards, as the result of His decree. This is much the strongest of the arguments brought forward to prove the doctrine of universal decrees, although Edwards barely more than mentions it. There is, however, also a questionable assumption in^{this} reasoning. Must we assert that, because God is all-powerful, He cannot delegate freedom in a limited sphere to His creatures? Is it not at least arguable that to deny God the power of endowing His creatures with the capacity of contrary choice is itself to place a limitation upon His power?

Does omnipotence mean more than that God is in control of His world? Must it mean that He can control His world only as He decrees everything which takes place in it? These are questions which we shall treat in the constructive portion of the thesis, but we mention them here to suggest that the doctrine of universal decrees does not follow as a self-evident corollary from the doctrine of God's omnipotence.

In addition to these arguments advanced by Edwards in proof of the decrees in general, he also advances one, very briefly stated, specifically in proof of the decree of election. It is the old argument that God must elect, if merit is not to be ascribed to man. "If there be no election, then it is not God that makes men to differ, expressly contrary to Scripture. Some of the ill consequences of the Arminian doctrine are, that it robs God of the greater part of the glory of his grace, and takes away a principal motive to love and praise him, and exalts man to God's room, and ascribes that glory to self, which belongs to God alone."⁴¹ The motive behind this argument seems inviolable: we can surely not brook a theory which robs God of His glory, or which lends itself to a pharisaical doctrine of human merit. But the question arises whether or not, in view of this, we are forced to accept the doctrine of unconditional election. Is it true that God is robbed of His glory, and man enabled to merit salvation, if contingency is granted to the latter? Is there any room for "boasting" if man is granted the power

⁴¹ Edwards, Concerning the Divine Decrees, Works, Vol. VIII, p. 370.

of humbly accepting God's grace? To answer this question fully would be again to anticipate the constructive portion of the thesis. Suffice it therefore to say here that the assertion that unconditional election is the only alternative to a doctrine of human merit at least requires proof, - and Edwards does not furnish this. He does as a matter of fact supplement this argument/in proof of election by a number of Scriptural quotations and proof-texts, but, as we have already observed, it is not worth our while to reproduce them.

V. The Divine Decrees and The Character of God

Calvinism has always been criticized on the ground that it impugns the character of God. The defense against this charge has taken one of two lines. It has sometimes been replied that God's sovereignty lifts Him above the reach of criticism based on our moral conceptions, that "His ways are past finding out", that His conduct must simply be accepted because it is His. This is the line of defense usually made by those who picture God as being in essence arbitrary will. Edwards, as we have seen, chooses the other line of defense, seeking to vindicate God's conduct at the bar of our ethical standards. He thinks of God as morally perfect and seeks to show that His decrees are in harmony with His perfect character.

His method in this is to show that these decrees, or parts of decrees, which seem to reflect discredit upon God are justifiable, if not indeed in themselves, because they

serve good ends. We have noted that the decree permitting sin is justified because it makes possible the completer revelation of God's attributes. Election and reprobation, involving an apparently unjust discrimination between individuals and eternal misery for non-elect creatures, are defended on the ground that they too serve the high end of giving expression to God's mercy, grace and vindictive justice. And the cruelty and deception of appealing to creatures to be virtuous and repent by a "will of command", while a "will of decree" makes it impossible, are excusable since some must be foreordained to reprobation for the glory of God's justice. Thus God's character is cleared, because in each decree, however undesirable in itself, He is aiming at worthy ends.

Now the ultimate end which justifies all these things is the "shining forth of God's glory". It is the revealing of His attributes and the securing of their recognition by mankind which is His purpose. More exactly, this is His primary purpose, for the communicating of His goodness is given as a part of His fundamental aim, and here the creature's good is obviously in view. The decrees indeed do result in the happiness of the elect. But having said this, it must be emphasized that the creature's good and happiness is a highly subordinate aim. It is usually the mere manifestation of God's attributes that Edwards speaks of. Further, when the creature's good is taken account of, it is a rule not conceived of as an end in itself, but as a means to

the glorifying of God's love.

If we lack other evidence of the fact that it is God's glory and not the creature's good and happiness which is aimed at, the actual effects of the decrees should be more than sufficient. For their net result is the production of far more evil and misery than good and happiness. As the consequence of the decrees all men are sinful, not because the possibility of sin is necessary as a means of character development, but simply because God can be glorified through sin. A large part of mankind is preordained to eternal suffering from which there is no possibility of escape. That some are elected to eternal life serves only to emphasize the arbitrariness of their selection and the helpless plight of the damned. All this is true, and yet according to Edwards, God could have created all men good and have saved all. Clearly the good and happiness of the creature is so subordinate in God's purpose as to be of negligible significance.

The question which forces itself upon us is whether such an end justified the means. We can brook the surgeon's knife for the good that comes from its use. But we can never justify the willing of suffering and evil by a person merely for the purpose of revealing that which is noble in his character. And so far as our moral sense is concerned, this would be indefensible even in a person of infinite worth and perfections. God is indeed worthy of the highest praise for possessing infinite perfections, but after all, what inherent value is there in His displaying those per-

fections? Since it cannot be replied according to Edwards' teaching that this revelation is valuable because of the good it causes the creature, the only answer is that it is good in itself. But such a self-centered aim is not praiseworthy in a man, even if the means of its accomplishment are harmless. And we cannot say that God's moral perfection justifies such display in Him, for this desire to display one's attributes is precisely not what we associate with moral perfection. The only reply that we can make is that God's being sovereign justifies it. That is to say, His omnipotence justifies what is to us morally wrong. Now when we give this answer, we are departing from the position Edwards is striving to maintain, namely, that the doctrine of the decrees can be ethically vindicated. Yet this, in the final analysis is all that can be said. If we hold to a doctrine of universal decrees, we must do so with the understanding that we forego the attempt to moralize God's aims in regard to man.

Even, however, if we could justify God's fundamental aim,- the kind of aim that a thoroughgoing determinism necessitates our ascribing to Him,- it is beyond all possibility to justify God's using such means to accomplish His aim. The willing of sin, arbitrary discrimination, deception, and eternal punishment of beings who were created only to be damned, constitute too dear a price to pay merely that a sovereign's glory be revealed. As a matter of fact such means could not accomplish the end, for they reveal, not a God of infinite perfection, but a God who is unloving,

unjust, cruel and deceitful. In short, they reveal a God who is supreme only in power, and thus again the futility of trying to reconcile a doctrine of unconditional decrees with a God of perfect character.

It is not only true that the acts attributed to God in Edwards' doctrine of the decrees cannot be justified on the basis of the end they are supposed to accomplish; some of them could never be justified on the basis of any conceivable end. For some of them are not merely undesirable means to worthy ends but are in themselves wrong, and incapable of extenuation under any circumstances. We could justify the permission of sin if such permission were necessary for the development of character. But can we ever excuse the injustice of unconditional election, or regard as loving the heart that creates individuals condemned to eternal/suffering before their birth? Can we palliate the doctrine of the secret and revealed will? These are things which, so far as we can see, could under no circumstances be done with the right motives. To do them would be to sin, and as Edwards insists, we can never justify sinning that good may come.

It is clear, then, that Edwards fails to reconcile his doctrine of universal and absolute/decrees with his idea of God's will as determined in all its acts by His holy inclination. Absolute decrees imply either an arbitrary will, which is independent of God's character, or an imperfect character. The latter alternative is of course out of the question for a Christian theologian. Hence the only re-

course left to Edwards is that which Calvin took in the Institutes, namely, the acknowledgment that God is essentially supreme will, that His will cannot be thought of as controlled by His character, nor His acts be called to judgment by our moral standards.

Thus in Edwards we see the conflict between the idea of God as good and as sovereign in its most acute form. When thinking of God's will in its relation to His nature, he takes the position that it is controlled by that nature, and thus directed to the sublimest ends. That is to say, he holds that God's will is moral. But when thinking of God's will in relation to the universe, he champions a doctrine of universal and absolute decrees, in all its detailed implications, which is in direct contradiction to the notion that God's will is moral, as we see morality. Strive as he may, he cannot divorce the conception of unconditional decrees from the idea of God's will as arbitrary, except by the utterly untenable method of impugning His character.

When it comes to deciding which was nearer his heart, the idea of universal predestination, with all that it involves, or the idea of God as a wise and good Governor, whose will is in subordination to His nature, the answer is, without doubt, the former. God as sovereign will takes pre-eminence over God as love.

In this connection Dr. George A. Gordon says we should take Edwards at his best, that is, we should accept his idea of God as absolute love as his fundamental position and simply recognize that his deterministic system is not the

expression of his truest and deepest conviction. "It is only justice to Edwards to hold him to his best thought of God; it is only justice to allow his thought of God to abolish his thought of man."⁴² This is a generous, but an entirely false, interpretation of Edwards. The import of his thought as a whole is that God's sovereignty must be upheld at all costs. His youthful "conversion" to Calvinism was an acceptance of divine sovereignty as expressed in predestination. All his deterministic works are unflinchingly consistent with this notion of God's absoluteness, his method being to establish a deterministic position, and then attempt to reconcile this as well as possible with the notion of God as love. But there never is any compromise from the side of his rigid determinism. Further, Edwards' last great treatises, representing, we may assume, his mature and final theology, are among his most polemical and strictly deterministic works. As Gordon himself insists, their motive is the defense of God's absoluteness, and no one could argue that it is God's absoluteness as love rather than supreme power that is defended in the Enquiry and the Treatise on Original Sin. We would indeed be untrue to Edwards if we did not take due notice of his recognition of God as love, and his faithful portrayal and defense of it in many of his works. But we should be even more untrue to him, did we not recognize as his fundamental passion the establishment and defense of a deterministic system, which implies a God

⁴²George A. Gordon, in *Jonathan Edwards: A Retrospect*, p. 64.

of naked sovereignty and absolute will.

It is hardly necessary to advert here to the distinction between the secret and the revealed will of God. If the doctrine of absolute decrees, out of which this distinction grows, is untenable in Christian theology, this is a sufficient refutation of the view that there are two wills in God. We simply observe that, apart altogether from the objections already raised against it, a theory which defends God's sovereignty at the cost of asserting a dualism in His will is paying a heavy price. It adds to our problems the vexing question, Why two wills, and why in opposition rather than in harmony? This is a question which is bound to force itself upon us, even if we allow the decreeing of sin by God's secret, or "disposing", will to be ethically justified.

Before leaving this examination of Edwards' doctrine of the decrees, it should be observed that we have not criticized Edwards' position that God's permitting sin is different from His committing sin. We shall examine this idea, however, when we take up his treatment of the doctrine of original sin.

CHAPTER VI

THE FREEDOM OF THE WILL

The next feature of Edwards' Calvinistic system to come before us is his theory of volition. It was on the subject of the will that his chief effort was expended. He realized that it was the heart of the difficulty between the Calvinists and the Arminians, and felt that if he could establish the doctrine of the necessity of volitions, without destroying the reality of choice and of human responsibility, the battle against Arminianism would be won. "It is easy to see", he says, "how the decision of most of the points in controversy, between Calvinists and Arminians, depends on the determination of this grand article concerning the Freedom of the Will requisite to moral agency; and that by clearing and establishing the Calvinistic doctrine in this point, the chief arguments are obviated, by which Arminian doctrines in general are supported, and the contrary doctrines demonstratively confirmed."¹

The great source for our study of Edwards' doctrine of the will is his Careful and Strict Enquiry into the Modern

¹ Edwards, Enquiry, Works, Vol. I, pp 416-417.

Prevailing Notions of that Freedom of Will, which is Supposed to be Essential to Moral Agency, Virtue and Vice, Reward and Punishment, Praise and Blame. This work is divided into four parts, the first, he entitles, "Explanation of Terms, etc.", and in it he states his theory of volition. The second part deals with the "Arminian Notion of Liberty", the third, with "Moral Agency, Virtue and Vice", and the fourth, with "The Chief Grounds of the Reasoning of Arminians." These last three parts constitute his proof of the necessity of volitions. Some of his arguments, as the titles of the parts imply, are refutations of the Arminian theory. But any argument which destroys the Arminian view, in his mind, supports the deterministic theory, and is thus a proof of his own position. It is really impossible to separate the refutation of the Arminian theory from the proofs of his own view,- each argument is double-edged, attacking the Arminian idea of freedom and defending the doctrine of necessity. We shall therefore treat the material in these last three parts under a single main head, as proofs of Edwards' theory.

I. Edwards' Theory of Volition

1. The Nature of Volition

Without preliminaries Edwards begins his Enquiry with the statement that the will is "That by which the mind chooses any thing." The faculty of the Will, is that power, or principle of mind, by which it is capable of choosing: an

act of the Will is the same as an act of choosing or choice."²
 In the brief explanation he gives of the term choice he seems to imply that it is an act of selection between two or more alternatives, each of which is possible. To choose, he says, means to choose "one thing rather than the contrary", and a little later he makes the statement that "for the soul to act voluntarily, is evermore to act "electively."³

We are told immediately after this, however, that choosing is the same thing as preferring. "So that if we carefully distinguish the proper objects of the several acts of the Will, it will not appear by this, and such like instances, that there is any difference between volition and preference."⁴ To act "electively" then does not necessarily mean to choose between open possibilities, but merely that in every volition the mind is more inclined to, or has a greater preference for, the thing it wills than that which is not willed. Of two courses of action, only one may be possible, but the selection of it may none the less express the mind's preference. It is thus clear at the outset that Edwards uses the term, choice, with quite a different meaning from that it bears in the mouth of the indeterminist.

In taking the position that choosing and preferring are identical Edwards makes a significant divergence from the view advanced by Locke. The English philosopher, as we have seen, had held that the term, preferring, did not "pre-

²Edwards, Enquiry, Works, Vol. I, p. 127.

³ibid, p. 128.

⁴ibid, p. 129.

cisely" express the act of volition, since in some cases a person might will what he does not prefer. Edwards replies that it is entirely possible for us to choose something which is not what we remotely prefer, but that will and preference never clash with reference to the immediate object of choice, which is always the inducement of some external action or other mental action. In criticism of Locke's illustration that, while a man might prefer flying to walking, he never wills it, Edwards has this to say: "But the instance he mentions, does not prove that there is any thing else in willing, but merely preferring: for it should be considered what is the immediate object of the Will, with respect to a man's walking, or any other external action; which is not being removed from one place to another; on the earth, or through the air; these are remoter objects of preference; but such or such an immediate exertion of himself. The thing next chosen, or preferred, when a man wills to walk, is not his being removed to such a place where he would be, but such an exertion and motion of his legs and feet, etc. in order to it."⁵ The same line of criticism is followed against Locke's assertion that "the Will is perfectly distinguished from Desire." He seems, however, to hesitate at a complete identification of will and desire. "I do not suppose, that Will and Desire are words of precisely the same signification: Will seems to be a word of a more general signification, extending to things present and

⁵Edwards, Enquiry, Works, Vol. I, p. 128.

absent." ⁶ Possibly this is because there are many desires but only one strongest desire, that is, only one preference, and possibly Locke's influence is here felt. But Edwards is certain that will and desire never clash. "But yet I cannot think they are so entirely distinct, that they can ever be properly said to run counter." ⁷

This identification of will with preference, and, though more hesitatingly, with desire, is in keeping with Edwards' psychology of the faculties. Prior to the writing of the Enquiry he had followed Calvin rather than Locke in identifying the emotional and conative aspects of the self, the two aspects being variously designated as the affections, the inclination, the heart, and the will. His early Notes on the Mind included a title for the treatise he intended to grow out of them which read in part as follows: "Being a Particular Enquiry into the Nature of the Human Mind, with respect to both its Faculties - the Understanding and the Will." ⁸ Here the identification of the will and the emotions is clear. The "understanding" included four important operations of the mind, - sensation, imagination, memory, and judgment. The idea that the will and the emotions are not to be distinguished reappears some twenty-two to twenty-five years later in his Thoughts Concerning the Present Revival of Religion in New England, where we find this statement: "I humbly conceive that the affections

⁶ Edwards, Enquiry, Works, Vol. I, p. 129.

⁷ Ibid, p. 129.

⁸ Edwards, Notes on the Mind, Works, Edited by S.E. Dwight, Vol. I, p. 664.

of the soul are not properly distinguished from the will, as though they were two faculties. All acts of the affections are in some sense acts of the will, and all the acts of the will are acts of the affections."⁹ Four years later in his Treatise Concerning Religious Affections he still takes the same position: "God has endued the soul with two principal faculties: the one, that by which it is capable of perception and speculation, or by which it discerns, and judges of things; which is called the understanding. The other, that by which the soul is some way inclined with respect to the things it views or considers..... This (latter) faculty is called by various names: it is sometimes called the inclination; and, as it respects the actions determined and governed by it, the will: and the mind, with regard to the exercises of this faculty, is often called the heart." ¹⁰

On the following page we have this statement: "The will, and the affections of the soul, are not two faculties; the affections are not essentially distinct from the will, nor do they differ from the mere actings of the will and the inclination, but only in the liveliness and sensibility of exercise." ¹¹ The will is thus, according to this psychology, only a particular sort of emotion, differing from other emotions only in its "liveliness and sensibility of exercise", and in the fact that it is followed by the action

⁹ Edwards, Some Thoughts Concerning the Present Revival of Religion in New England, Works, Vol. VI, p. 9.

¹⁰ Edwards, A Treatise Concerning Religious Affections, Works, Vol. IV, p. 10.

¹¹ *ibid*, p. 11.

which is the object of the volition. When Edwards begins the Enquiry by identifying volition with the emotions of desire and preference, he is therefore holding true to his previously established position. We find him also on one other occasion in the Enquiry expressly speaking of the affections as "only certain modes of the exercise of the will."¹² The distinction between the will and the emotions was never definitely attempted in the New England Theology until Samuel West published his Essays on Liberty and Necessity in 1793, and the attempt was not successful until Asa Burton introduced the distinction in 1824.

Had Edwards held steadily to this identification of the will with the emotions, of choosing with preferring, his treatment of the subject of the will would have been far less ambiguous and more convincing. But unfortunately he seems, in the Enquiry and in other of his deterministic writings, more often to imply the distinction between the emotions and the will than to deny it. We have already seen that he started by identifying willing with choosing, or acting electively, which would seem almost to imply the power of contrary choice, and certainly to indicate a phenomenon far more active than an emotion. Further, he sometimes speaks, as we have seen, of the will's not clashing with preference and desire, as though they might be distinct, although always in harmony, the will always following preference and desire. But far more significant is the fact that, as we shall see,

¹² Edwards, Enquiry, Works, Vol. I, p. 289.

it is a fundamental position of the Enquiry, and of his entire deterministic theology, that volition is affected by the heart, or the inclination, or the disposition, that is, by the emotional part of the self. Evil volitions are said to spring from an evil heart, or inclination, and good volitions to be caused by a good heart, or disposition. The heart affects the mind's view of what is the greatest good, and thus plays a part in determining its choices. The clear implication of this position is that emotion and volition are differentiated,- otherwise the will determines itself, which Edwards holds absurd.

There was undoubtedly a serious ambiguity in Edwards' mind regarding this whole matter. Had he followed Locke in his distinction between the conative and the emotional aspects of the self, and used different terms to describe different phenomena, he would have spared himself, and even more his readers, endless confusion. As Fisher, Allen, and Foster all agree, however, he never really clarifies his position with reference to the matter. Allen points out the ambiguity of the term, choice: "But the close scrutiny to which it (i.e., The Enquiry) has been subjected has revealed a confusion in Edwards' mind as one source of the difficulty which the student encounters. The work starts out with a definition of the will as 'that by which the mind chooses anything',-- a definition which might be allowed to stand, though far from being an adequate one. But even to this definition Edwards does not adhere. Hardly is he launched in his argument when he is found resting upon another ground,

that the will is that by which the mind desires or inclines to anything; and this ambiguity of the word 'choice' runs throughout the treatise."¹³ It of course follows, that the term, inclination, is equally ambiguous. As Foster says, "The confusion resulted in the entire ambiguity of the word 'inclination', which is sometimes used to denote an emotion and often in the same sentence, and in the process of a vital argument, used immediately thereafter, as if no change of meaning had been made, to denote a volition."¹⁴ According to Fisher the principal inconsistency of Edwards in his dealing with the subject of the will is "the failure persistently to identify or persistently to distinguish voluntary and involuntary inclinations. Inclination and choice", he continues, "are treated as indistinguishable, and yet the one is spoken of as the antecedent and cause of the other."¹⁵

2. The Cause of Volitions

Having discussed the nature of volition, Edwards is now ready to answer the question, what determines the will, and to this he devotes the second section of Part I of his Enquiry. "By determining the Will, if the phrase be used with any meaning, must be intended", he says, "causing that the act of the Will or Choice should be thus and not otherwise."¹⁶ "It is sufficient to my present purpose to say", he answers, "It is that motive, which, as it stands in the

¹³ A.V.G.Allen, The Life and Writings of Jonathan Edwards, pp 287-288.

¹⁴ F.H.Foster, A History of the New England Theology, p. 65.

¹⁵ G.P.Fisher, History of Christian Doctrine, p. 398.

¹⁶ Edwards, Enquiry, Works, Vol. I, p. 131.

view of the mind, is the strongest, that determines the Will."¹⁷ In this general position he is following Locke and a long line of deterministic thinkers.

Although he holds that the will is determined by the strongest motive, Edwards does not represent the self as the scene of recurrent combats between various motives, as certain of the determinists had done. For him one motive simply possesses the greatest strength and he apparently does not think of it as having to fight for the ascendancy. It might be pointed out here, however, that the physical analogy of the strongest force underlies his thought, an analogy which is faulty at many points, and to which, when applied to a deterministic theory, there is a fatal objection. In the physical world, when two forces act upon an object, although one may be stronger, both combine in producing the effect. But in the case of two motives which are candidates for the determination of the will, it is only the stronger which produces an effect. Now if the exclusion of the weaker motive is attributed to a selective power in the will or self, this particular difficulty is obviated. But on the deterministic view, no such selective power exists,- what takes place is referred wholly to the motive, which acts upon the will just as a physical force acts upon an inert body. Why the weaker motive does not produce its full effect along with the stronger, as does the weaker force in the physical world, the determinist cannot say. Edwards makes no attempt

¹⁷Edwards, Enquiry, Works, Vol. I, p. 131.

to meet the difficulty, and apparently the problem never occurs to him.

What he means by the strongest motive will become clear in a moment. Let us ask first what he means by a motive. The motive is, he says, "the whole of that which moves, excites, or invites the mind to volition, whether that be one thing singly, or many things conjunctly."¹⁸ This is a highly unsatisfactory definition of motive. It states nothing whatsoever as to its nature, defining it simply by reference to its function as the determinant of the will. It really adds nothing to the statement that the will is determined by the strongest motive. Edwards never advances a better formal definition than this; we are left to infer indirectly from his discussion what he means by the term. It will be noted that in his rather broad definition there may be included external objects as well as mental states. However, he goes on to say that in order to have the power to determine volition, whatever is "objectively" a motive must be something which is "extant in the view or apprehension of the understanding, or perceiving faculty."¹⁹ Nothing can operate upon the self as a motive until in some way it comes before the mind.

Edwards has been severely criticized, and justly so, for this manifestly inadequate definition of motive. He sets himself to explain what determines the will, and answers that it is the strongest motive. But he then explains

¹⁸ Edwards, Enquiry, Works, Vol. I, p. 131. ¹⁹ *ibid*, p. 132.

motive by saying merely that it is that which "moves, excites, or invites the mind to volition", i.e., that which determines volition, a definition which leaves us in the dark as to what really constitutes the motive. As R. G. Hazard remarks: "This definition of motive then amounts simply to this: that whatever influences the mind in willing is a motive; and what does not influence it is not a motive." ²⁰ It is true that when Edwards proceeds to tell us what makes one motive stronger, he throws additional light on the matter, but the vagueness in his conception of the nature of motive is never entirely dispelled.

A further objection to his definition is brought forward by Professor Henry Calderwood, who takes exception to it on the ground that it begs the question in dispute. "If", he says, "the law of mental activities be that motives excite to volition, further philosophical investigation is useless. The matter is settled on the necessitarian side. The will is not free." ²¹ The definition is, of course, partisan, but then so are others which Edwards gives,- for that matter it may be impossible to give non-partisan definitions in this dispute,- but if we recognize that Edwards is here simply stating his theory, which he subsequently intends to defend, the partisan character of the definition need not concern us. The major weakness in his definition of motive lies in its inadequacy, i.e., in its failure to tell us what a motive really is.

²⁰R. G. Hazard, *The Freedom of the Mind in Willing*, p. 331.

²¹Henry Calderwood, *Handbook of Moral Philosophy*, p. 177.

While examining Edwards' definition of motive, it is fitting to notice a criticism brought forward by Dr. Albert Tayler Bledsoe, in his Examination of President Edwards' Inquiry into the Freedom of the Will. He points out that Edwards sometimes speaks of the motive as determining the will to act, and sometimes as determining the will to act in a particular way. This vacillation will be noted in the quotations above. The question is, Edwards states, "what causes the choice to be thus and not otherwise", but when he defines motive, it is said to be "the whole of that which moves, excites, or invites the mind to volition", that is, motive is not only what causes the will to act in a particular way, but also that which causes it to act at all. As we continue our study it will become apparent that it is in this latter sense that he understands the motive to determine the will,- it causes it to act, and also to act in a specific way. If Edwards should admit that the motive did not cause the will to act, but only to act in a particular way, he would lay himself open to the charge of teaching motive to be only the occasion of volition, while leaving the will to be the actual cause of it, a charge which, as we shall see, was actually made, but on other grounds. This inconsistency in Edwards' statements pointed out by Bledsoe is only one instance of numerous cases throughout the Enquiry in which he uses language loosely.

Let us now ask what Edwards means by the strongest motive. A necessary characteristic of motive, he says, is that it have strength, that is, that it have "some sort and

degree of tendency, or advantage, to move or excite the Will, previous to the effect, or to the act of the Will excited."²² The quality which makes up this tendency or advantage to move the will is its being viewed as a good. "But so much I think may be determined in general, without room for controversy, that whatever is perceived or apprehended by an intelligent and voluntary agent, which has the nature and influence of a motive to volition or choice, is considered or viewed as good."²³ It will follow that "the Will always is, as the greatest apparent good is,"²⁴ it being understood that the good refers to the immediate object of the volition, not to a remote object.

Edwards goes on to explain that he here uses the term, good, as identical in meaning with the term, agreeable. "It must be observed in what sense I use the term 'good'; namely, as of the same import with 'agreeable'.... The word 'good', in this sense, includes in its signification, the removal or avoiding of evil, or of that which is disagreeable and uneasy.... So that here is included what Mr. Locke supposes determines the Will. For when he speaks of 'uneasiness' as determining the Will, he must be understood as supposing that the end or aim which governs in the volition or act of preference, is the avoiding or removal of that uneasiness; and that is the same thing as choosing and seeking what is more easy and agreeable."²⁵ This position

²² Edwards, Enquiry, Works, Vol. I, p. 132.

²³ *ibid*, p. 132.

²⁴ *ibid*, p. 133.

²⁵ *ibid*, p. 133.

is in entire conformity with the view that the will never clashes with preference or desire. In following that which is the most agreeable the will is following that which excites the strongest preference, or is the most desirable.

As it appears later the "most agreeable" is not necessarily synonymous with moral good, for it is entirely possible that what we know to be morally evil may be viewed as the "most agreeable". Nor is the course which commends itself as "the most agreeable" necessarily synonymous with that which is the most reasonable, for although the will always "follows the last dictate of the understanding" in some sense, Edwards makes it clear that the dictate of reason may be overcome if it is not in conformity with that which appears "most agreeable". A man will never do right simply because it is right, nor act rationally simply because it is rational, but only because it is "most agreeable."

This theory of motivation is thus thoroughly hedonistic. Man is represented as always seeking that which is the most pleasing to him. In the Treatise Concerning Religious Affections Edwards makes the statement that "all the exercises of inclination and will, are concerned either in approving and liking, or disapproving and rejecting."²⁶ However, while it is true that he is psychologically a hedonist, the same does not hold for his theory of ethics.

²⁶ Edwards, A Treatise Concerning Religious Affections, Works, Vol. IV, p. 12.

True virtue, he says, in his Dissertation Concerning the Nature of True Virtue, is love to being in general, and he insists that it cannot be completely reduced to self-love. Man ought not always to act from the motive of self-love, he urges in this dissertation; but when he is thinking of how a man actually does act, he admits that he is always determined by that which is the most agreeable to him.

Edwards never gives any proof of the fact that the strength of a motive consists in its being regarded as the most agreeable. He simply assumes it in this section where he sets forth the position, and the arguments of the Enquiry are designed only to prove that the will is determined, not that it is either determined by, or is identical with, that motive which has the characteristic of the most agreeable. The only reason for saying an object chosen is the most agreeable is that it is chosen. Further, he does not attempt to prove that the will never clashes with preference or desire, but simply shows, in connection with the illustrations used by Locke, that a difference between what we will and what we remotely prefer or desire leaves it possible for will and preference or desire to coincide with regard to the immediate object of choice. There is no other positive proof that they do and must always coincide, and far less that they are identical.

The failure of the proof is not so significant a matter as the fact that Edwards taught what he did. His position makes it impossible for him to be classed with the teleological determinists,- with those who hold man's

freedom to consist in his capacity to rise above hedonistic considerations and be determined by ends apprehended purely as moral or spiritual goods.

It will be noted that in the answer Edwards gives to the question of what moves the will there is up to this point much that is similar to Locke. Both hold that the will is moved by the strongest motive. Both believe that the mind is always moved by that which appears to it the greatest good, or happiness. Both are thus psychological hedonists. There does emerge, however, one significant difference. While motive, for Edwards, up to this point in his discussion, is that which is perceived as agreeable, for Locke it is the "uneasiness" of desire arising from this. In his psychology of volition Locke is thus clearly thinking in terms of the distinction he has drawn between desire and will. The volitional process is analyzed in accordance with his three-fold division of the mind's "powers" or "faculties". There is, first, the judgment of the "understanding" as to the greatest good or happiness. There follows the "greatest uneasiness", an emotional experience, which constitutes the direct motive for the willing. The volition in its turn is an expression of the will or conative aspect of the self. Edwards, on the other hand, when he analyzes the volitional process into the motive, i.e., that which appears most agreeable, and the volition, which follows, is thinking in terms of his two-fold division of the mind's powers. That which appears most agreeable, that is, the motive, is, as his language usually implies, a judgment, "the last dic-

tate of the understanding", although it may involve also an emotional element. This being so, the volition is, as he has told us, the desiring or preferring or choosing the object, and is thus simply a special sort of emotion. We have already seen, however, that he was not unfailingly true to the identification of will and emotion, frequently implying a distinction between them, and thus, without admitting it, affirming the truth of Locke's analysis.

Thus far Edwards' theory of motivation appears clear-cut enough. The will, or volition, is completely determined by the strongest motive, that is, by that which, in the view of the mind, is the most agreeable. But he now makes a statement in further elucidation of his meaning so significant that we quote it in full: "I have rather chosen to express myself thus, 'that the Will always is as the greatest apparent good', or 'as what appears most agreeable', than to say 'that the Will is determined by the greatest apparent good', or 'by what seems most agreeable'; because an appearing most agreeable to the mind, and the mind's preferring, seem scarcely distinct. If strict propriety of speech be insisted on, it may more properly be said, that the voluntary action, which is the immediate consequence of the mind's choice, is determined by that which appears most agreeable, than the choice itself; but that volition itself is always determined by that in or about the mind's view of the object, which causes it to appear most agreeable."²⁷ That

²⁷ Edwards, Enquiry, Works, Vol. I, p. 134.

in or about the mind's view of the object which causes it to appear most agreeable, he goes on to say, "is not only what appears in the object viewed, but also the manner of the view, and the state and circumstances of the mind that views."²⁸ "The manner of the view" and the "state and circumstances of the mind that views", he remarks later, are not really different, since the "state and circumstances of the mind" register themselves in their effect upon the "manner of the view". What he really intends to say, as his rather tedious and detailed exposition reveals, is that the mind, as affected by its inherited nature, its past experience, and any particular current condition, is one of the causes of a thing's appearing most agreeable. The other cause is the object and its circumstances. To say that the object and the mind are the causes of the object's appearing most agreeable is really to say that the perception of the most agreeable results from the relationship of the object and the mind, with the latter's particular nature or character.

There is, of course, nothing unique in this account of the rise of motives. What is of signal importance, however, is the statement that "volition itself is always determined by that in or about the mind's view of the object, which causes it to appear most agreeable." This is expressly to identify volition with the object's appearing most agreeable, which he has hitherto spoken of as the

²⁸ Edwards, *Enquiry*, Works, Vol. I, pp 134-135.

motive. It is to assert that the object's appearing most agreeable constitutes choice in itself, not that it causes choice.

The inconsistency of this position and that with which Edwards began was exhibited sixteen years after the Enquiry by James Dana, who issued anonymously a criticism of the Enquiry in 1770. After quoting the passage in which Edwards shifts his position, he remarks: "Here it is fully declared, that 'properly speaking', volition and the highest motive are not distinct things - that the former is only as the latter, and not determined by it. Motive cannot be the ground and determiner of volition, and at the same time the act of volition itself... Instead of the strongest motive's being the cause of volition, the real truth is, that volition is the cause of external action."²⁹

This really means, Dana goes on to argue, that Edwards denies volitions to be determined by motives. "Thus volition being nothing diverse from the strongest motive, but the same thing with it - it being improper to say, that the will is determined by the strongest motive; there can be 'no such relation between' motive and volition 'as is signified by the terms cause and effect'."³⁰ That Edwards has laid himself open to this criticism cannot be denied, in view of his express identification of what he had before spoken of as the motive (i.e., the object's appearing most agreeable) and the

²⁹ James Dana, An Examination of the Late Rev. President Edwards's Enquiry on Freedom of Will, p. 18.

³⁰ *ibid*, p. 19.

volition. Dana, however, makes his case by accepting Edwards' new identification of volition and the object's appearing most agreeable, while at the same time ignoring the different conception of motive which goes along with this. If we view Edwards' new position in its entirety, it is apparent that he does not deny the determining effect of motive on volition, but that he has moved to a new conception of motive as well as volition. The volition becomes the object's appearing most agreeable, while the motive becomes the mind and object in relation, that is, the cause of the object's appearing most agreeable. Thus what happens in any conative experience is this: the mind in relation to a certain object (i.e., either a physical object or a certain action) causes, as the motive, the experience of the most agreeable, which is choice, and following this arises the voluntary action. That this is different from the theory with which Edwards began is obvious, but it is equally obvious that he still holds volition to be determined by the strongest motive.

This new position to which he has advanced, however, leaves in the dark the question of what it is about the strongest motive which makes it strongest. Since it is no longer the fact that it is that which appears most agreeable which constitutes it the strongest, the appearing most agreeable being in reality the choice itself, it can only be said that the strongest motive is that which has the power to determine the will, to cause the experience of the most agreeable. Why one thing and not another appears most agreeable we are not told.

We now have before us, in the same section of the Enquiry, two different theories of volition. Apparently up to the point at which he began to discuss the causes of an object's appearing most agreeable, Edwards had regarded volition as distinct from, and caused by, that which appears most agreeable, which was the motive of the volition. Now he is identifying the two. This inconsistency, appearing at the first of the Enquiry, raises a difficult question of interpretation. Which of these views represents Edwards' real position? There is no further direct discussion of the problem in the Enquiry and we are therefore forced to rely on inference to answer the question.

In his Review of Edwards' Inquiry into the Freedom of Will, H. P. Tappan, who is one of his keenest commentators, takes the position that the author's real position is revealed in the quotation above, in which he identifies choice and the object's appearing most agreeable. "Edwards' meaning plainly is, that the terms are convertible: volition may be called the cause of voluntary action, or the sense of the most agreeable may be called the cause."³¹ "It may be well here to remark, that in the system we are thus endeavouring to state and to illustrate, the word choice is properly used to express the action of will, when that action is viewed in relation to its immediate effects,- as when I say, I choose to walk. The sense of the most agreeable, is properly used

³¹H. P. Tappan, Review of Edwards' Inquiry into the Freedom of the Will, p. 17.

to express the same action, when the action is viewed in relation to its own cause. Choice and volition are the words in common use, because men at large only think of choice and volition in reference to effects. But when the cause of choice is sought after by a philosophic mind, and is supposed to lie in the nature and circumstances of mind and object, then the sense of the most agreeable becomes the most appropriate form of expression." ³²

The weight of the evidence, however, would seem to lie against this interpretation of Edwards' position. The truth seems to be simply that he included the passage which has caused the dispute in a moment of inadvertency.

One reason for rejecting the view that this passage expresses his real position is the fact that it denies to the "understanding" the part Edwards has attributed to it in the volitional process. If the object's appearing most agreeable is the volition itself, then the appearing most agreeable is certainly not an act of the understanding. It is either a purely conative experience, or, if we hold Edwards to his expressed identification of the emotional and conative aspects of the self, it is a particular sort of emotion. This is what Tappan makes of it. According to him Edwards means, when he speaks of the object's appearing most agreeable, that we have the "sense" of the most agreeable, that is, that the appearing most agreeable is an emotion. This being the case, there is no rational judgment in the entire

³²Tappan, op. cit., pp 19-20.

process, the "understanding" serving only, if it serves at all, as a means of relating the "sensitivity" to the object. The object is not perceived as the greatest good but only felt as such. Now Edwards has nowhere except in the passage under discussion given us ground for even inferring that the object's appearing most agreeable is a purely emotional, or a conative, experience. On the contrary he has indicated clearly that he regards it as having to do, primarily at least, with the "understanding". The very fact that he uses the term 'appearing' so often implies an act of the intellect rather than of the emotions. Further, his insistence that an object, to be a motive, must be "extant in the view or apprehension of the understanding or perceiving faculty" seems to suggest that he regards its appearing most agreeable as a judgment. This is even more definitely implied by his statement that the will follows "the last dictate of the understanding". Now if the appearing of an object as most agreeable is an operation of the understanding, we cannot regard the disputed passage, in which he identifies it with the act of volition, as exhibiting his real position.

A second ground~~for~~ holding that the passage in question does not express Edwards' real opinion is the fact that it is not in keeping with passages and language elsewhere in the Enquiry. We have already seen that it is inconsistent with his explicit theory of what determines the will in the part of the section preceding it. And throughout the remainder of the Enquiry he speaks as though the volition follows the appearance of the most agreeable. In a few

pages after the passage we have been discussing, he begins to use language to that effect: "The choice of the mind", he says, "never departs from that which....appears most agreeable and pleasing, all things considered." ³³

It might be added that this passage is not given much attention by Edwards' commentators, except Tappan. Dana's reference to it is, as we have seen, dictated by a desire to twist Edwards' theory to his own purposes. Foster simply mentions it as a passage inconsistent with the general theory of the Enquiry. This fact that it has been so little noticed by students of Edwards is an additional reason for regarding it as an inadvertency.

Before leaving the discussion of Edwards' teaching as to what determines the will, two further observations may be appropriate. (a) It will be noted that there is no suggestion in Edwards of what has been called the education of the will. That is to say, there is no recognition of an effect of volition upon character, by which character might be progressively developed or weakened. The only causal relationship proceeds in the opposite direction, nature or character affecting the volition. Nor is this surprising, seeing that psychology in its modern sense was only in its infancy in Edwards' day. Nature or character was usually regarded as a fixed thing, and conduct could exert no modifying influence upon it, particularly when conduct was thought of as wholly determined. All change in character had to be looked

³³ Edwards, Enquiry, Works, Vol. I, p. 137.

for from some other source than the operations of the will. So static was our nature conceived to be, that the really significant change,- the change from the natural state to the state of faith,- was regarded as a purely supernatural, miraculous operation of the Holy Spirit upon us. The recognition of the plasticity of our nature and of the reciprocal influence of character and volition was not to come until later.

(b) In view of Edwards' early idealistic philosophy, the question naturally arises whether he taught that all motives and their strength are the immediate effect of the exercises of the divine will. He of course traced men's motives, like everything else, ultimately to the will of God. But according to his idealistic philosophy, the stable will of God is the immediate cause of perception by created beings, not only producing ideas in our minds, but causing the things perceived to be the objects of perception. It would seem to follow that motives are the direct result of God's will. No definite answer, however, can be given to this question, owing primarily to the uncertainty as to how completely Edwards retained his idealism in later life. Nevertheless his distinction between common and efficacious grace, in his later theological development, suggests strongly that he had moved away from his pure idealism, and that he regarded most motives as arising mediately from the operation of an objective nature. As we shall see, he taught that God, in the operation of efficacious grace, acts immediately upon the soul, producing motives by an operation

which involves both a change of nature and the immediate impartation of divine light (i.e., saving knowledge) to the mind. But in the case of common grace, God operates, he held, through the established laws of "nature", a statement which clearly implies that He does not act immediately upon the will.

3. The Necessity of Volitions

After giving his answer to the question, What determines the will? Edwards proceeds to discuss the meaning of the term, necessity, in its application to the will. He does not use the term, he says, in its popular sense, for there it applies to the connection between volition and its effects, and, like the terms, irresistible, impossible, unable, etc., it implies an opposition on the part of our wills which is overcome. It is rather in the philosophical sense that he wishes to use the term in this discussion.

Necessity in this sense, he says, applies not to the connection between volition and its effects, but to the relation between motive and volition. It thus does not imply that volitions are inevitable despite opposition, for there is no opposition of the will to motive. Necessity in the philosophical sense simply means certainly, a certainty, however, which is not merely a certainty of knowledge, but a certainty "that is in things themselves, which is the foundation of the certainty of knowledge."³⁴ The objection to the popular meaning of necessity in discussions of this

³⁴ Edwards, Enquiry, Works, Vol. I, p. 141.

kind holds likewise for a number of other cognate terms, such as impossible, irresistible, unable, etc. When used in connection with the will, says Edwards, these terms do not as a rule imply opposition on the part of the will which has to be overcome. The will always follows the motive in harmony and submission.

In his Life of Jonathan Edwards, Samuel Miller remarks that Edwards was probably the first Calvinistic theologian who "freely employed the word necessity",³⁵ but admits that all the chief ideas indicated by the term were recognized before. It is certain that Edwards was not the first to point out the objection to using the term in the sense which implies coercion of the will. The same feeling underlies many of Augustine's statements, as when he speaks of "the most blessed necessity" of not sinning under which God rest, and adds "si necessitas dicenda est."³⁶ Thomas Aquinas set forth the objection to all terms implying constraint, and particularly to the term, necessity, as clearly as Edwards. Fisher quotes Aquinas as follows: "That which is moved by another is said to be constrained (cogi) if it is moved against its own inclination (contra inclinationem propriam); but if it be moved by another which gives to it its own inclination (quod sibi dat propriam inclinationem) it is said to be constrained... So God in moving the will does not constrain it, because he gives to it its

³⁵ Samuel Miller, Life of Jonathan Edwards, in Jared Sparks' Library of American Biography, Vol. VIII, p. 226.

³⁶ Quoted by G.P. Fisher, History of Christian Doctrine, p. 339.

own inclination."³⁷ Fisher remarks that, in spite of these points of coincidence between him and earlier writers, Edwards did no borrowing from them in regard to his ideas about "moral necessity".³⁸ This is perhaps true, although, just as in the case of Edwards' relation to Berkeley, we have no means of finally settling the question.

In elucidation of the term, philosophical necessity, Edwards says that it is "really nothing else than the full and fixed connection between the things signified by the subject and predicate of a proposition, which affirms something to be true."³⁹ There are three ways in which two things may have this "full, fixed and certain connection." (a) When they are so connected "in and of themselves", - i.e., when denying this implies a contradiction or absurdity. (b) When the existence of the thing affirmed has already come to pass, the connection of the subject and predicate of the proposition affirming this existence is necessary. (c) When two things are connected consequential-ly; i.e., when one thing may be "surely and firmly" connected with something else that is necessary in one of the former respects. It is only in this last way, he goes on to say, that future things and those past things which had beginnings, that is, events of any kind, can be necessary. And thus it is only necessity in this sense which is

³⁷ G.P. Fisher, Discussions in History and Theology, p. 236.

³⁸ G.P. Fisher, An Unpublished Essay of Edwards on the Trinity, p. 36. (See Bibliography for full title.)

³⁹ Edwards, Enquiry, Works, Vol. I, p. 142.

relevant to the question of the will.

At this point it will be appropriate to discuss the question whether the connection between motive and volition was for Edwards one in which the motive was only the occasional, not the efficient cause of the volition. Differing views on this point have been the source in the New England Theology of conflicting interpretations of his teaching. In order to meet the argument of Samuel West, that motives, according to Edwards, do not determine volitions, the Younger Edwards advanced the view that motives were held by his father to be only the occasion of the action of the will, - that the will follows, as Professor Park put it, not a "law", but a "usage". Edwards' language at some points, though very rarely, did lend itself to this interpretation. One passage in particular in a section of the Enquiry entitled, "Whether any Event whatsoever, and Volition in particular, can come to pass without a Cause of its existence", has been taken to imply that he taught motives to be only the occasional causes of volitions. We quote it at some length. "I would explain how I would be understood, when I use the word Cause in this discourse; since, for want of a better word, I shall have occasion to use it in a sense which is more extensive, than that in which it is sometimes used. The word is often used in so restrained a sense as to signify only that which has a positive efficiency or influence to produce a thing, or bring it to pass. But there are many things which have no such positive productive influence; which yet are causes in this respect, that they

have truly the nature of a reason why some things are, rather than others; or why they are thus, rather than otherwise....I sometimes use the word Cause, in this enquiry, to signify any antecedent, either natural or moral, positive or negative, on which an Event, either a thing, or the manner and circumstance of a thing, so depends, that it is the ground and reason, either in whole, or in part, why it is, rather than not; or why it is as it is, rather than otherwise; or, in other words, any antecedent with which a consequent Event is so connected, that it truly belongs to the reason why the proposition which affirms that Event, is true; whether it has any positive influence, or not....I am the more careful thus to explain my meaning, that I may cut off occasion, from any that might seek occasion to cavil and object against some things which I may say concerning the dependence of all things which come to pass, on some Cause, and their connection with their cause."⁴⁰

Now in this passage Edwards does draw a distinction between an efficient and an occasional cause. But it will be noted that he never says expressly that he thinks of a motive as a cause in the latter sense. Nor does he do this anywhere else in the Enquiry. On the other hand, as Bledsoe says, the idea of motive as the efficient, productive cause is "wrought into the very substance and structure of his whole argument."⁴¹ Further, when Edwards defends his

⁴⁰ Edwards, Enquiry, Works, Vol. I, pp 164-165.

⁴¹ Albert Taylor Bledsoe, An Examination of President Edwards' Enquiry, p. 31.

position against opponents, he never suggests that in his view motive is only the occasion of the volition, but holds to the idea that it is the active and determining cause. He might easily, had it been his view, have disarmed his critics by pointing out that motive, for him, was only the occasion, while the agent was the productive cause of volition. In view of these things the more usual interpretation has been that motive, in Edwards, means always the efficient cause of choice,- and this is undoubtedly the correct view. The other interpretation was made and used for polemical purposes at a time when his disciples were attempting at once to remain loyal to him, and to modify his strict determinism. "But, when every allowance has been made", says Foster, "this cannot be said to be an objective interpretation of Edwards."⁴² To foist upon the Enquiry, where it is insisted upon every page that motives "give rise to", "determine", "cause", "excite to", or "tend to produce" choice, the notion that the causation is only "occasional" is to wrest the meaning of plain language beyond all reason. What purpose may have led Edwards to include the quoted passage on the meaning of cause, unless it was a desire to seem to concede something to his opponents, we cannot suggest.

In his doctrine of the necessity of volitions Edwards makes no exceptions. There is no individual whose will is not subject to this necessity, and there is never

⁴²Frank Hugh Foster, A Genetic History of ^{the}New England Theology, p. 70.

an act of the will which is not necessitated. With this universal application of the notion of necessity he departs from the main stream of Calvinistic thought in two respects. In Augustine, Calvin, and in the doctrine of the Westminster Confession, a certain liberty of will ad utrumvis, or power of contrary choice, was ascribed to Adam. In Edwards' view, however, we are possessed of as much freedom as Adam ever had. Again, it was the common Calvinistic doctrine that while mankind, as a result of the fall, had lost their ability to perform religious obedience, they were still free outside of this sphere in civil and secular matters. Edwards, on the other hand, teaching not an acquired, but a natural necessity, extends it to all acts of choice.

Not only does he apply his idea of necessity to every human volition, but he likewise includes under its aegis the acts of the divine will. Three entire sections of the Enquiry are given to the subject of the necessity of God's volitions. When he is arguing the consistency of necessity and moral agency, he places great weight upon the fact,- which he treats as though generally accepted,- that God's moral excellence is necessary, that His holy actions are determined by His holy nature. Absent is all trace of the conception of the arbitrariness of the divine will. Furthermore there are the most explicit statements to the effect that God's "mere good pleasure" indicates only an independence of anything outside Himself, not of His own wisdom and character. "The sovereignty of God", he writes,

"is His ability and authority to do whatever pleases Him... The following things belong to the sovereignty of God; viz, (1) Supreme, Universal, and Infinite Power; whereby He is able to do as He pleases...without any subjection, in the least measure, to any other power.... (2) That He has supreme authority; absolute and most perfect right to do what He wills, without subjection to any superior authority. ...(3) That His Will is supreme, underived, and independent on anything without Himself; being in everything determined by His own counsel, having no other rule but His own wisdom... (4) That His Wisdom, which determines His will, is supreme, perfect, underived, self-sufficient and independent. ...If God's will is steadily and surely determined in everything by Supreme wisdom, then it is in everything necessarily determined to that which is most wise." ⁴³ Nothing could be clearer than this; and the fact, already pointed out, that in his later and maturer works Edwards is at pains to prove the moral nature of God's acts, only goes to strengthen the evidence that he had moved away from his earlier conception of an arbitrary, and therefore undetermined, will, to a belief in God's will as completely determined. Sovereignty comes to mean, not the freedom of God's Will, but the independence and supremacy of God in relation to everything else.

In this position Edwards departs markedly from Calvin's teaching in the Institutes. To Calvin God's sovereign-

⁴³ Edwards, Enquiry, Works, Vol. I, pp 359-360.

ty meant what it did in Edwards' earlier writings, namely, His arbitrary will, unfettered by anything, even within God Himself. To Calvin God did not act in a certain way because it was right, but rather God's acting in a certain way made it right. For him, God, to be sovereign, must possess a free will, the kind of freedom presumably lost by the creature in the fall. In Edwards' mind, however,- and this will become clearer as we study his conception of freedom,- the fact that God's will is perfectly determined by His wisdom is altogether consistent with the most complete freedom. God's freedom consists in His power to do what He wills, to perform the action which is the object of His volition, not in the capacity to will independently of His nature. God possesses no "moral ability" to will evil, but He possesses untrammelled "natural ability", i.e., power to do what He wills. Thus the most perfect necessity of will is consistent with the most perfect freedom.

Having examined Edwards' general conception of necessary connection or causation in its application to the relation between motive and will, let us now note an important distinction which he draws. Philosophical necessity, he says, may be either moral or natural. Moral necessity, as used in the Enquiry, he defines as "that Necessity of connection and consequence, which arises from such moral causes, as the strength of inclination, or motives, and the connection which there is in many cases between these, and such certain volitions and actions."⁴⁴ By natural

⁴⁴ Edwards, Enquiry, Works, Vol. I, p. 146.

necessity he means "such Necessity as men are under through the force of natural causes; as distinguished from what are called moral causes, such as habits and dispositions of the heart, and moral motives and inducements."⁴⁵ As the definitions indicate, it is "moral necessity", the necessity of volitions under the determining influence of motives, with which the Enquiry is concerned. With regard to this there are two things we are to note. In the first place, moral necessity may be as absolute as natural necessity, that is, the effect may be as perfectly connected with its cause as any natural, necessary effect is with its natural cause. In the second place, we are not to think of moral necessity as unnatural. It is as much "owing to the nature of things" as natural necessity. In fact there is no difference in the nature of the connection between the terms, the only difference being in the terms themselves,- in one case they are natural, and in the other, moral, or as we should say, psychological. Thus acts of will are absolutely necessary, and they are connected with motives in the same way that natural events are connected with their causes.

In the light of the foregoing, Edwards' distinction between natural and moral inability can be made clear, a distinction hailed by his followers as an unanswerable argument for Calvinism. Natural inability denotes a lack of the capacity to do a thing, even though we will to do it, an inability which arises "because what is most commonly called

⁴⁵ Edwards, Enquiry, Works, Vol. I, p. 146.

nature does not allow of it, or because of some impeding defect or obstacle that is extrinsic to the will."⁴⁶ We are naturally unable when the voluntary action does not follow our volitions. The term inability here applies to the relationship between choice and voluntary action. Moral inability, on the other hand, consists "either in the want of inclination; or the strength of a contrary inclination; or the want of sufficient motives in view, to induce and excite the act of the will, or the strength of apparent motives to the contrary."⁴⁷ (Note that the will is here distinguished from the inclination.) This is an inability which might be called a negative moral necessity, a necessity making impossible the performance of a certain act, not because the voluntary action fails to follow the willing of it, but because we are unable to will it. The motive which might produce the volition is either non-existent or too weak. Thus while natural inability consists, not in the absence of the volition, but in its inability to produce its object, moral inability consists merely in the absence of sufficient motive. For, even granted the volition, an extraneous cause may break the connection between it and the effect at which it is aimed, but nothing ever breaks the connection between an adequate motive and its volition. Moral inability, Edwards continues, may be "general and habitual", that is, due to some abiding defect of nature, or "particular and

⁴⁶ Edwards, Enquiry, Works, Vol. I, p. 149.

⁴⁷ *ibid*, p. 149.

occasional", that is, due to the strength or weakness of motives arising on a particular occasion.

Although Edwards says nothing at this point of natural and moral ability, he does make use of these positive notions. As will be inferred from the foregoing, natural ability consists in the certainty of the connection between the volition and its object. If, when willed, the voluntary action follows, the agent possesses natural ability. On the other hand, moral ability means the possession of the motive, in sufficient strength, to give rise to the volition in question.

It is evident that we may possess either form of ability without the other. If some natural impediment prevents my walking when I will to walk, this nevertheless does not impair my moral ability to exert the volition. On the other hand, while I may be unable to will to walk, it may be true that, if I willed, I could walk, there being no breach in the connection between the volition and its object.

The distinction between natural and moral ability and inability is of fundamental importance in Edwards' system, since he makes use of it in his attempt to reconcile freedom and necessity. It is an extremely ingenious distinction, and one which, in his day, was acclaimed by Calvinists as solving the most difficult problem raised by their theological system. Edwards is not to be credited with being the first to use this distinction, however, as Dwight and some others thought. Joseph Truman, an English dissenting minister of the 17th century, had used the distinction at

least sixty years before the Enquiry in a treatise entitled, On Moral and Natural Impotency. Indeed the French Calvinist, Amyrault, had hit upon the same idea at Samaur one hundred years earlier than the Enquiry, when he was grappling with the same problem. It is certain, though, that Edwards, who knew no French, had never read Amyrault, and probably that he did not know Truman's treatise. He may, therefore, have been original in his idea, although not the first to arrive at it.

4. The Freedom of Man

We now have before us Edwards' fully developed deterministic theory of the will. The will is determined by motives which arise from causes over which the individual has no control whatsoever. (This is true whichever of his two theories we accept, that is, whether we regard him as identifying the appearing of the most agreeable with volition or with the motive.) Motive and willing, or choice, are connected by a necessity as absolute and fixed as any that can be conceived. That man's volitions are simply links in an inexorable chain of cause and effect, Edwards is not only ready to concede, but has written the Enquiry to prove.

Nevertheless, he is equally anxious to show that man is free, and to this he devotes the next section of the Enquiry. He begins with his definition of freedom: "The plain and obvious meaning of the words Freedom and Liberty, in common speech, is The power, opportunity, or advantage,

that any one has, to do as he pleases."⁴⁸ The term "do as he pleases" is used as synonymous with "do as he chooses" or "as he wills". Freedom, he conceives, attaches to the relation between volition and its effects, that is, the voluntary action. So long as the conduct one wills actually follows the willing of it, one is free,- if when I will to walk, my legs obey, I am free to walk. Freedom is thus the "natural ability" to perform the action willed, and will exist provided no external force prevents the volition from being followed by its object. It is thus for Edwards really a physical liberty.

He makes much of the fact that his definition of freedom is that of the average man, the meaning which has always attached to the term. This, however, is obviously open to debate. One interesting reply to the Enquiry was a postscript affixed to the fourth edition of Whitby's Discourse on the Five Points of Calvinism, in which the author undertakes to show, by quotations from the Fathers and later writers, that Edwards' use of the term, freedom, did not arise until the time of Augustine.

It will be noted that the conception of freedom here advanced is the same as that which Locke held. Edwards, however, holds more consistently to this notion, whereas Locke, as we have seen, moved on to lay increased emphasis on freedom as the power to suspend action pending deliberation,- an idea essentially different from that with which he began.

⁴⁸ Edwards, Enquiry, Works, Vol. I, p. 152.

Assuming that his definition of freedom is so "plain and obvious" that one cannot but agree to it, Edwards proceeds to point out two implications which follow from it. It will add to the clarity of our statement if we note the second of these first. Freedom, he says, has no relation whatsoever to the origin of the volition. It means simply the power to do as one chooses "without taking into the meaning of the word, anything of the cause of that choice." ⁴⁹ So far as the mere conception of freedom is concerned, the choice may be either caused by some "external motive" or "internal habitual bias" or "internal antecedent volition"; or it may take place without a cause, being entirely disconnected with anything foregoing. This of course follows necessarily from the fact that freedom relates solely to the connection between volition and its effects.

The other of the two corollaries of his definition is that freedom, or its contrary, can belong only to the agent possessing the will, not to the will itself. Here again Edwards is reproducing Locke. No freedom, he says, can be ascribed to anything but that which has "such a faculty, power, or property, as is called will",⁵⁰ since only the possession of a will gives the "power or opportunity of doing according to its will." ⁵¹ "And therefore to talk of Liberty, or the contrary, as belonging to the very will itself, is not to speak good sense; ... For the will itself

⁴⁹ Edwards, Enquiry, Works, Vol. I, p. 153.

⁵⁰ *ibid*, p. 152.

⁵¹ *ibid*, p. 152.

is not an Agent that has a will: the power of choosing, itself, has not a power of choosing." ⁵²

It is a highly significant assertion that Edwards makes when he says that only that which possesses a will can act according to its will or do what it pleases. If we ask why this is so, it will appear that only two things could make the possession of a will necessary: (a) the fact that the will is the cause of the action willed, or (b) the fact that the will is the condition of the action, volition being an indispensable antecedent to action-in-accordance-with-will. But to regard the will as the cause of the action is to attribute to it the capacity to do as it wills, and that is to ascribe/^{it}freedom in the Edwardean sense, which Edwards does not allow. If the will causes the action, this would also mean, according to his reasoning, the denial of his position that the possession of a will is essential to doing as one pleases, since the will cannot possess a will. It seems, therefore, that Edwards, in asserting that the possession of a will is essential to acting according to one's will, is regarding the will as only the condition of such action. As far as his definition of freedom itself is concerned, it would be quite legitimate to regard the will as the cause of the voluntary action, but this is ruled out by the corollary that freedom can belong only to the agent.

He thus rejects the idea of a cause and effect relationship between volition and voluntary action in order to

⁵²Edwards, Enquiry, Works, Vol. I, p. 152.

be able to predicate freedom of the agent. This, however, was a false step. For if the will does not have the capacity to perform the action willed, there is no sense in which this capacity can belong to the agent. By definition the agent is free only if he has the power to do as he pleases. Now if he does not possess this capacity by virtue of the fact that his will possess it, there is no way, so far as Edwards' account goes, in which he can possess it. He cannot be said to possess it owing to the fact that the motive is his, because the motive can do nothing but produce a volition which is powerless to produce the action willed. Again, the capacity to "do as one pleases" is attributable neither to the agent's intellect nor to his emotional "faculty", unless emotion is identified with will, and this would be to predicate freedom of the will itself. Nor does Edwards show any way in which freedom could belong to the self as a whole, considered as more than the sum of its capacities. The truth is that, on his theory, the agent does not have the power to "do as he pleases". The capacity is really due to the necessary connection between volition and its object,- which may be a natural law or may even be thought of as God.

Up until the point at which he gives his definition of freedom Edwards had apparently taken the other view with regard to the relation between volition and voluntary action. He seems to have regarded the former as the cause of the latter. In discussing moral inability he speaks of "external actions which are dependent on the act of the will and which

would be easily performed, if the act of the will were present." ⁵³ And previous to this he had spoken of the voluntary action as being the immediate consequence of the mind's choice. This language all implies that he conceived of volition as being the cause of the action willed. Had he held to this idea, however, he would have been constrained to attribute the freedom to do as it pleases to the will itself, and this he was unwilling to do. The result is that he tacitly abandons the notion of the will as the efficient cause of the production of its object, when he attempts to deduce from his definition of freedom the fact that freedom is attributable only to the agent.

The question will naturally arise as to why Edwards was unwilling to attribute freedom in the sense in which he defined it to the will. The reason undoubtedly was that he felt this would have been conceding too much to the Arminians. He had an instinctive aversion to their notion of a liberty of indifference residing in the will, and although freedom in the sense he used it was vastly different from the Arminian conception and would not have isolated the free will from the rest of the self, as was the case with the Arminians, he could not bring himself to say that the will possesses any freedom. Any liberty of the will would have smacked of contingency.

Had Edwards held consistently to the notion of the will as producing the object willed, he could have avoided

⁵³ Edwards, Enquiry, Works, Vol. I, p. 151.

to some extent this difficulty. He could have attributed freedom to the will without thereby denying it to the self, as was inevitable in the Arminian theory. For since, according to his theory, the volition is the effect of the motive, the real power would have resided in the motive, and the motive, Edwards insists, belongs to the self. Freedom could, therefore, have been attributed to the agent by virtue of its very connection with the agent's will.

While this would have been an acceptable solution of the problem to the determinist, it would still have been a very meagre sense in which the agent could have been said to be free. For according to Edwards, the agent has no control over the rise of motives, nor their connection with volition, - he is only the arena in which the action takes place. This is a rather minor role for the self to play. In fact it leaves the self really no part at all in that process to which freedom is attributed. The exclusion of the self from the willing process, however, is an inevitable result of the analytical method employed by the determinist. There is nothing personal in the causal series formed by character, motive, and will. Even if these things are said to belong to the self, it is left merely as the spectator of the process. A self which is something more than an arena in which volition takes place, or an aggregate of parts or processes, a self which is a true personality, has no part in willing as far as Edwards' theory is concerned.

The whole question, therefore, whether the capacity to "do as one pleases" is to be located in the will or in the

agent, loses its reality when examined in the light of Edwards' basic determinism. So long as this remains, the agent can hardly be said to possess freedom, even in the Edwardean sense. Not only is the question unreal, but it is unimportant, for the conception of freedom remains the same, whether it be attributed to the will or to the agent. It is only when freedom in the sense of choice between open possibilities is at stake, that the question whether it belongs to the will or to the agent becomes both real~~and~~ vital.

Edwards is probably right in saying that the ordinary man would accept his definition of freedom. But there is grave doubt whether the ordinary man would go with him in the position that doing what one pleases implies no ability to choose between real alternatives. D. D. Whedon insists that his type of necessitation is even more fatal than the external co-action he denies. " 'The fates lead the willing, but drag the unwilling.' Fata ducunt volentem, nolentem trahunt. But a deeper fate allows no nolentem." ⁵⁴ In fact even many deterministic thinkers disagree with Edwards. His position is in definite contradiction to that of Calvin in the Institutes. Calvin himself of course denied the power of the will to choose between good and evil, but as we may recall, he denounces rather scornfully those who, accepting this view, at the same time insist that man is free.

Edwards, however, was as strenuous in his insistence upon the freedom of man as he was upon the necessity of his

⁵⁴ D. D. Whedon, *The Freedom of the Will*, p. 41.

volitions. His theory of the will was in essentials that of Hobbes, Collins, and Hume, but he objected to being classed with those who denied freedom to man. In 1751 Lord Kames (Henry Home), of Scotland, had published a volume entitled: Essays on the Principles of Morality, and Natural Religion, which included an essay on liberty and necessity, in which he took the following position: "The resolution being taken, the choice being made, upon what is it founded? Certainly upon some motive, however silent or weak: for no mortal ever came to a determination, without the influence of some motive or other. If this be an undoubted fact, it follows of consequence, that the determination must result, from that motive, which has the greatest influence for the time; or from what appears the best and most eligible upon the whole." ⁵⁵ As the quotation reveals, Kames' theory was in essence that of Edwards and it was not strange that the former heralded the Enquiry as a confirmation of his position. "that, "if motives are not under our power, which is confessedly the fact, we can, at bottom, have no liberty." ⁵⁶ But in an open letter to Dr. John Erskine, which subsequently was appended to the Enquiry, Edwards examined Kames' essay and reiterated his claim that nothing he had said of the necessity of volitions was to be construed as denying that a man is endowed with "the highest degree of liberty that ever was thought of, or that ever

⁵⁵ Lord Kames, Essays on the Principles of Morality, and Natural Religion, p. 167.

⁵⁶ *ibid*, p. 168.

could possibly enter the heart of any man to conceive." 57

Edwards' attempted combination of freedom and necessity has led him to be claimed as an ally by champions of freedom as well as necessity. But if those who took his determinism seriously, such as Kames, found it difficult to reconcile with his ascription of freedom to man, those who took seriously his assertion of freedom found it equally difficult to acquiesce in his determinism. As the New England Theology developed, there arose among many of its leaders a tendency increasingly to deny the necessity of volitions. Yet these leaders claimed Edwards as their master, and found the authorization for their position in his insistence upon man's possession of natural ability and of genuine freedom. Winfield Burggraaff says: "From the distinction of Edwards between natural and moral ability, it (i.e., the N.E.Theology) travelled on until with Finney man is declared to be completely free. Sin is a free act; conversion is a free act; regeneration is a free act. Pelagianism was one of the legitimate offsprings of the Edwardian theology." 58

5. The Conditions of Moral Agency

It seems well at this point to ask what Edwards' views were as to the conditions of moral agency, although to answer the question completely we must consult certain sections in Part III of the Enquiry, where he attacks the

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Edwards, *Enquiry*, Works, Vol. I, p. 430.

58 Winfield Burggraaff, *The Rise and Development of Liberal Theology in America*, pp 118-119.

Arminian position on this point! In his treatment of this subject of responsibility he departs completely from Locke, who grounded it in our capacity to suspend action and reflect on the object of our volition.

In ~~the~~ section we have just been examining he remarks briefly that a moral being is one to whose acts can be attributed moral quality, and that two things are necessary for a moral agent: (a) the capacity to perceive moral distinctions, and (b) the capacity to be influenced by moral inducements or motives. In connection with this latter capacity he of course holds that nothing, including moral objects, can influence action except in so far as it is viewed as agreeable.

In Part III of the Enquiry Edwards mentions another condition that must obtain wherever we are held responsible for our actions. That condition is natural ability. "Natural inability", he says, "arising from the want of natural capacity, or external hindrance (which alone is properly called Inability) without doubt wholly excuses, or makes a thing improperly the matter of Command."⁵⁹ Where we are unable to produce the action willed, we are not responsible for it.

While not explicitly stated, it is in keeping with Edwards' thought to say that he regarded the possession of the faculty of will as grounding our responsibility in the most significant sense, namely, our responsibility for

⁵⁹ Edwards, Enquiry, Works, Vol. I, pp 288-289.

volitions. We are responsible for our volitions, not, indeed, because we can freely determine what they shall be, but because they are the acts of our will by which we choose, and take up our attitude toward the good and the bad. Because it is the faculty of the self by which decisions are made, the will is the proper subject of commands, etc., and its volitions are acts for which the self must be held responsible. To let Edwards put it in his own words: "But now the soul has no other faculty whereby it can, in the most direct and proper sense, consent, yield to, or comply with any Command, but the faculty of the will; and it is by this faculty only, that the soul can directly disobey, or refuse compliance: for the very notions of consenting, yielding, accepting, complying, refusing, rejecting, etc., are, according to the meaning of the terms, nothing but certain acts of the will. Obedience, in the primary nature of it, is the submitting and yielding of the will of one, to the will of another. Disobedience is the not consenting, nor complying of the will of the commanded, to the manifested will of the commander....So that it is manifest, the will^{self} may be required: and the being of a good will is the most proper, direct and immediate subject of Command." 60

These four things, then, constitute man a responsible moral agent: (a) the capacity to perceive moral distinctions, (b) the capacity to be influenced by moral induce-

ments, (c) the possession of natural ability, i.e., of freedom as Edwards conceives it, and (d) the "faculty" of willing. There can be no reason for disagreeing with Edwards on the score that these conditions are essential to responsible moral agency. A question must be raised, however, on the ground of what has been omitted,- there is no mention of any power of genuine contrary choice as prerequisite to responsibility.

Let us ask now what, in Edwards' view, is the extent of a man's responsibility, that is to say, what are those things/for which he can be held responsible. The answer to this question is substantially implied in what has been said as to the conditions of moral agency. To begin with, we are of course responsible for those actions or effects which are the results of our volition. This is implied in the statement quoted above in which Edwards explains that natural inability absolves us from responsibility for those actions which it renders impossible. In the second place, we are responsible for our volitions. "The will itself, and not only those actions which are the effects of the will, is the proper object of Precepts or Command." ⁶¹

Now there are no conditions under which a man is not responsible for his volitions. If the volition is unable to produce the voluntary action, he is nevertheless responsible for the volition. And, more important still, though the motive to the right choice be lacking or too weak, so that

⁶¹Edwards, Enquiry, Works, Vol. I, pp 280-281.

the agent is "morally unable" to make the right choice, he is still responsible for the choice made. "And therefore those things may properly be commanded, for which men have a moral Inability."⁶² Responsibility for volitions, in short, is conditioned upon neither natural nor moral ability, and has no relationship to freedom, even in Edwards' sense of the term. In contrast to the Arminians, and to indeterminists generally, he conceives no power of contrary choice to be essential to a person's being morally responsible. To this position Edwards held with unflinching consistency through all his works. It is the most significant feature in his teaching in regard to moral agency. Indeed, and this is of importance, we are responsible for other things by virtue of their connection with the will. "Other acts that are not the acts of the will, as certain motions of the body and alterations in the soul, are Obedience or Disobedience only indirectly, as they are connected with the state or actions of the will, according to an established law of nature."⁶³ In the final analysis it is volition and only volition for which we are primarily responsible.

In conformity with this position we find Edwards, in dealing with the question of original sin, insisting that we are responsible for the radical sinfulness of our inherited nature, which exposes us to damnation even before the first actual sin is committed, because Adam's first sin, from which our depraved nature is derived, was in fact our act

⁶² Edwards, Enquiry, Works, Vol. I, p. 288. ⁶³ *ibid*, p. 281.

and our sin. When our nature gives rise to what appears our first sinful act, the truth is that this is not our first actual sin,- we sinned first when we sinned in Adam. And our depravity of nature is itself the result of our sin; our evil disposition is not non-voluntary, but is one of the "alterations in the soul" which is the fruit of our own volition. Edwards does not point out this origin of our evil dispositions in the Enquiry, and in fact argues, as we shall see later, that we are responsible for them solely because of their evil nature, regardless of their source. It was the general Calvinistic belief that we are responsible for non-voluntary dispositions, and it is not surprising that Edwards failed to maintain consistently his variant position. When we come to his doctrine of grace, we find him squarely in the Calvinistic fold, in asserting that God arbitrarily renews our heart, implanting in us virtuous tendencies, which make us eligible for salvation. Nevertheless, despite these lapses from the position, his assertion of the voluntary nature of sin is probably true to his deepest convictions. This point of view and his clinging to the term, freedom, can be explained only as partial concessions to the feeling that responsibility implies the power of contrary choice. He does not make the full concession, for he insists that all volitions are determined, but his refusal to admit responsibility for non-voluntary dispositions is a step away from strict Calvinism in the direction of genuine freedom.

II. The Proof of the Necessity of Volitions

The bulk of the Enquiry, three of the four parts, is devoted to a proof of Edwards' theory of the will. More precisely, it is aimed at the establishment of his central thesis that the will is determined by the motive. If this is granted, Edwards seemed to feel, the theory as a whole must be accepted.

It is significant that he offers no direct proof of his assertion that the will is determined by the strongest motive. He is concerned solely to prove that the will is determined, that a self-determining power in the will is absurd. The fact that it is a motive which determines the will, and not something else, is taken for granted. As far as his proof is concerned, it would be as true to say that the will is determined by physical movements in the brain as by a psychological motive. And incidentally, such an interpretation would apparently not be out of keeping with his formal definition of motive as "the whole of that which moves, excites, or invites the mind to volition." It is also taken for granted that it is the strongest motive which determines the will. Apparently it never occurs to Edwards that a weaker, but more ~~but~~ ^{more} ~~worthful~~ ^{worthful} motive might sometimes cause the volition, and he devotes no effort to debating this matter. This conclusion that it is the strongest motive which determines the will, says H. P. Tappan, is based on the proposition that the will is determined, and is thus a petitio principii. We have already seen that Edwards likewise ~~assumed~~ ^{assumed} that the strength of a motive consists in

its appearing agreeable, an assumption which is also unsupported by proof.

The arguments he advances in his proof of the necessity of volitions for a large part take the form of an attack on the Arminian theory of the will. The reason for this is two-fold. In the first place, Edwards is dedicated to the overthrow of the whole Arminian system of theology. In the second place, the refutation of the Arminian notion of freedom is for him an indirect and a very cogent method of establishing his own position. It is a fundamental assumption of the Enquiry that there are but two alternatives, the Arminian and the Calvinistic. There being no third choice, it is all one for his purpose whether he is attacking the Arminians or defending his own conception.

Three major arguments are used, each of which is double-edged, developing his own view while attacking the Arminian. He begins with a proof based on the axiom that every cause must have a preceding effect. This is followed by an argument from the divine foreknowledge. He concludes with an argument that determinism is demanded as the basis of moral agency. These are not always given consecutively, nor are they clearly delimited, but the substance of his thought falls under these three heads.

1. The Argument from the Nature of Causation

The first of the three leading proofs, as we have seen, is based on the nature of causation, more precisely, on the nature of causation as conceived by Edwards. Taking

as his thesis the axiom of natural science that every event must have a preceding, distinct cause, he uses this as a weapon to overcome the Arminian notion of volitions as events which possess their own causative efficiency. The argument is a battle of the conception of derivative causality against that of the spontaneity of finite spirits. Every real or possible "evasion" of the Arminians is hunted down, exposed as a denial of causation, and condemned in the light of the principle that every event is necessary, - the effect of its antecedent cause.

As Professor Fisher remarks, Edwards' adversaries, represented by men like Whitby and Chubb, "must have felt that he took advantage of the infirmities of language, and confuted what they said rather than what they meant, yet it is quite untrue that he was guilty of any conscious unfairness. He was not the man purposely to surround himself with 'mist, the common gloss of theologians.' He had no faith in their conception of freedom, however it might be formulated." ⁶³

We shall not follow him in all the trivial minutaeⁱ of his argument as with wearisome repetition, albeit with matchless subtlety, he reiterates the principle of the necessity of volitions, but shall endeavor to extract the significant points in his attack upon the Arminian principle of the creative will. He begins with a criticism of this notion defined as the self-determining power of the will.

⁶³G. P. Fisher, Discussions in History and Theology, pp 237-8.

This leads to a criticism of it as expressed by the term contingency. He then attacks the idea formulated as the "liberty of indifference", and finally gives a positive statement of the grounds for believing in the necessity of volitions. We shall discuss these four phases of the argument in the order mentioned.

a. The Impossibility of a Self-determining Power in the Will

The idea of a self-determining power in the will is disposed of by Edwards in a striking piece of reasoning, which, because of its importance,- and as an excellent example of his method,- we quote at some length. "If the Will, which we find governs the members of the body, and determines their motions, does also govern itself, and determines its own actions, it doubtless determines them the same way, even by antecedent volitions....So that if the freedom of the Will consists in this, that it has itself and its own actions under its command and direction, and its own volitions are determined by itself, it will follow, that every free volition arises from another antecedent volition, directing and commanding that: and if that directing volition be also free, in that also the Will is determined; that is to say, that directing volition is determined by another going before that; and so on, till we come to the first volition in the whole series: and if that first volition be free, and the Will self-determined in it, then that is determined by another volition preceding that. Which is a contradiction; because by the supposition, it can have none before it, to

direct or determine it, being the first in the train. But if that first volition is not determined by any preceding act of the Will, then that act is not determined by the Will, and so is not free in the Arminian notion of freedom, which consists in the Will's self-determination. And if that first act of the Will which determines and fixes the subsequent acts, be not free, none of the following acts, which are determined by it can be free."⁶⁴ This is the substance of his argument against self-determination of the will, an argument which, says Frank Hugh Foster, he repeats at least a hundred times. It will be recognized as the argument given in substance by Locke. The Arminian finds himself in a dilemma: either he must admit a free choice before the first free choice (or if he wishes, an endless series of choices), or he must accept determinism. Edwards points out later that to choose the first horn of the dilemma is not only to admit a free choice before the first free choice, but also to admit that all the choices following the first one are determined,- determined by the preceding choices of the will.

The basis^{upon} which he proceeds in forcing the Arminians into this dilemma is his fundamental principle that every act of the will is the effect of a preceding cause. Negatively stated, this means that there can be no such thing as a single act by which the will/^{both} exerts a volition and causes that volition. There is no such thing as a

⁶⁴Edwards, Enquiry, Works, Vol. I, p. 158.

single creative act of the will. This position being assumed, the self-determination of the will can mean only one thing: namely, that the will determines one volition by an antecedent volition. The Arminian position is thus demolished at one stroke.

To strengthen his argument Edwards proceeds now to examine four possible "evasions" of his reasoning. The first two, which he invents himself only to expose and shatter against his principle of necessity, are highly imaginery and are not worth our discussion. The third is more significant. The Arminians, he says, may reply to him that the determination of the will does not imply two distinct acts, but that "the exertion of the act is the determination of the act; that for the soul to exert a particular volition, is for it to cause and determine that act of volition." ⁶⁵ This "evasion" is significant because, as a matter of fact, it is exactly what the Arminians did mean,- a single creative act of the will,- and it gives Edwards a chance to come face to face with the issue. The way in which he "rings the changes" as to the implications of the term, self-determination, makes one wonder sometimes whether he is not unintentionally arguing more against the term than the idea it was intended to convey. But all doubt is dispelled as he confronts the "evasion" before us. His reply, however, is disappointing; he merely reiterates his fundamental position. "The question is, What influences, direct, or determines

⁶⁵ Edwards, Enquiry, Works, Vol. I, p. 162.

the mind or will to come to such a conclusion or choice as it does?...Now it must be answered, according to the Arminian notion of freedom, that the will influences, orders and determines itself thus to act. And if it does, I say, it must be by some antecedent act. To say, it is caused, influenced and determined by something, and yet not determined by any thing antecedent, either in order of time or nature, is a contradiction."⁶⁶ Nothing could be clearer,- a creative act of will is an impossibility and there is an end of the matter. Volitions must be determined.

This concludes his criticism of the idea of the self-determination of the will. The fourth "evasion", to which we have referred, leads him into a discussion of the Arminian conception of the contingency of volitions, and brings us to the second phase of his argument based on the nature of causation.

Before entering upon an examination of this we might note the remarkable fact that Edwards fails completely to see that the fallacy of the infinite series, which he urges against the Arminians, applies in fact to determinism rather than to indeterminism. For if a preceding cause is required for everything, there must be a cause for that relation between our nature and our circumstances which gives rise to the motive, and in turn a cause for this cause, and so on ad infinitum. If we carry on this process far enough we eventually succeed in overthrowing God Himself, for we run

⁶⁶ Edwards, Enquiry, Works, Vol. I, p. 163.

back finally to the divine will. But even here, according to Edwards' ripest thought, we cannot stop, for the explanation of God's volitions must be sought in His motives, which in turn spring from His nature. Nor can we, so long as we apply the principle of transeunt causation, deny an antecedent cause of God's nature, nor a cause for this cause, and so on. We are carried straight back through God in an eternal regress. If to escape this, we postulate an arbitrary, and thus a non-determined will in God, as did Edwards in his sermon on God's Sovereignty in the Salvation of Men, we impugn the principle of transeunt causation, and allow to God the free will Edwards has denounced as preposterous in man. It is thus his own argument that runs into a dilemma: he must either admit that his position involves an infinite regress, or he must desert the ground upon which he has attacked the Arminian, by admitting in the case of God the possibility of an undetermined will.

b. The Impossibility of the Contingency of Volitions

The fourth "evasion" of his reasoning, says Edwards, takes the form of an assertion that the self-determination of the will means the arising of volitions without any cause at all. This is precisely what the Arminians mean, he asserts, when they speak of volitions as contingent events. "Their opinion implies, that the particular determination of volition is without any cause; because they hold the free acts of the will to be contingent events; and contingency is

essential to freedom in their notion of it." ⁶⁷ In explaining his own theory of the will Edwards defines a contingent event as one that has no fixed and certain connection with any previous ground or reason of its existence. And this is tantamount in his view to saying that it is without any cause whatsoever.

By way of answer to this "evasion" he enters upon an extended proof of the fact that no event comes to pass without a cause, and that volitions are no exception. Even if it could be proved, he continues, that volitions do come to pass without a cause, this would refute the Arminian doctrine of the self-determination of the will. For according to this, the will causes its own volitions,- they are not uncaused. The assertion of both self-determination and contingency is thus a gross inconsistency.

Now if contingency means coming to pass without cause, it is undoubtedly inconsistent with the self-determination of the will. Further, it can be shown, as Edwards has done, that chance has no place in an intelligible universe. But the Arminians did not mean that a contingent will has no cause. He meant simply that its volitions were not effects of a preceding cause. The will, he was trying to say, has the power of creativity, of initiating its own acts spontaneously. Hence Edwards' argument in proof of the fact that nothing comes to pass without a cause is manifestly beside the point. The Arminian is quite ready to agree with

⁶⁷Edwards, Enquiry, Works, Vol. I, p. 164.

him in this general position: what he needs to prove is that the causation exerted in volitions is a derivative causation, that there is no such thing as a spontaneous cause in man.

The significant feature in Edwards' dealing with this "evasion", therefore, is not his proof of universal causality and demonstration of the inconsistency of causelessness and self-determination, but his identification of contingency with the absence of cause. He arrives at this identification, as we have seen, by direct inference from the fact that a contingent event has no connection with a previous cause. But this inference is valid only if it is true that all events are the results of antecedent causes. It is, therefore, based on the same principle he has used in his criticism of the notion of self-determination. But this principle is always assumed, never proved. All events for Edwards are the necessary results of antecedent causes, and to deny this either by asserting self-determination or contingency of the will is to run into absurdity.

3. The Impossibility of a Liberty of Indifference in the Will

Edwards now takes up the third phase of his argument from the nature of causation, which consists in a refutation of the conception of a liberty of indifference in the will, a notion which Locke, before him, had rejected. This phrase, liberty of indifference, was only another way of expressing the Arminian conception of the creative will. It denoted a will in absolute independence of all motives or influence.

Edwards begins by pointing out that the Arminians must mean by their doctrine of the liberty of indifference,

not only that the will is indifferent before the volition but actually during the volition. "For the thing supposed, wherein this grand argument consists, is, that among several things the Will actually chooses one before another, at the same time that it is perfectly indifferent."⁶⁸ This is a just interpretation of their meaning, he insists, for freedom is not lost during volition, and freedom consists, they hold, in the indifference of the will. Edwards quotes an unidentified Arminian author as follows: "'Where the objects which are proposed, appear equally fit or good....the will does as it were make a good to itself by its own choice, i.e., creates its own pleasure or delight in this self-chosen good.'" ⁶⁹ This implies, as Edwards says, that the will is indifferent while choosing, preference coming as a result of choice. Now if this is true, he continues, the Arminian is utterly inconsistent with himself. To say that the will chooses while in a state of indifference "is the very same thing as to say, the mind has a preference, at the same time that it has no preference."⁷⁰ But obviously, "Choice and preference can no more be in a state of Indifference, than motion can be in a state of rest, or than the preponderation of the scale/^{of a balance} can be in a state of equilibrium."⁷¹

This criticism, that choice, being preference, is an act which, in its nature, is opposed to indifference, reveals a fundamental defect in this Arminian method of ex-

⁶⁸Edwards, Enquiry, Works, Vol. I, p. 179.

⁶⁹ibid, p. 179.

⁷⁰ibid, p. 179.

⁷¹ibid, p. 180..

pression. We need not agree with Edwards in identifying preference and choice, but we can go with him^{to} the extent of maintaining that no choice takes place without expressing some desire or purpose. It cannot, therefore, be called a completely indifferent act, and the will cannot be said to remain absolutely indifferent throughout volition. For the will to choose is for it to move out of a state of indifference.

The phrase, liberty of indifference, however, is ambiguous, being susceptible of two interpretations. In one sense it refers to a will which, in its nature, is unbiased, expressive of no choice, susceptible to no tendency. In this sense, as we have just seen, the will could not possibly be indifferent during volition. In its other sense, liberty of indifference indicates the will's independence of determination or influence by antecedent factors. The conception, to use Edwards' own words, is of "such an Indifference as leaves the Will not determined already; but free from actual possession, and vacant of predetermination, so far, that there may be room for the exercise of the self-determining power of the Will."⁷² Now it is this notion, the notion of a creative, spontaneous will,- the same he has expressed by the terms, self-determination and contingency,- which the Arminian is really trying to express by the phrase, liberty of indifference. And this is a distinct conception from that of an act of volition indifferent in the sense of expressing no purpose

⁷² Edwards, Enquiry, Works, Vol. I, p. 186.

nor desire.

In saying that choice is inconsistent with any indifference, Edwards is therefore asserting not only that all choice involves purpose and expresses some desire on the part of the self, but also that indifference in the sense of freedom from determination by motive is inapplicable to the will. "If it be possible for the understanding to act in indifference, yet surely the Will never does; because the Will beginning to act is the very same thing as it beginning to choose or prefer. And if in the very first act of the Will, the mind prefers something, then the idea of that thing preferred, does at that time preponderate, or prevail in the mind: or, which is the same thing, the idea of it has a prevailing influence of the Will." ⁷³ Willing is preference, and preference is the result of a prevailing motive.

If anyone should deny this, he says, and contend that the will can cause itself to change from a state of indifference and exert an act of preference, this will not help matters. For this causing of the act of preference, or choice, must itself be an act of choice, that is to say, an act of will. If not,- if the act springs from a state of indifference,- it is determined by something other than the will and is not therefore free. But, he concludes, to assert that this act of will takes place prior to the act of preference it causes, is to assert an act of choice while the will is indifferent, and this is to return to the same absurdity

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Edwards, Enquiry, Works, Vol. I, p. 180.

we have already noted. It is to regard the will as indifferent in the very act of determining itself to an act expressing a certain preference.

Now this argument against the conception of the will's indifference in the sense of freedom from determination by motive takes the form, it can be seen, of a simple assertion of the contradictory position. Willing is preferring and is therefore determined. Edwards cannot conceive of one originaive act in which the will spontaneously expresses a desire or preference. This involves in his mind two acts, one expressing the preference and the other causing the act expressing the preference. Thus the principle that an act of will can take place only as the result of a preceding cause is the basis of the criticism here, and is the same as that upon which the criticism of the self-determination, and the contingency of the will has turned in the two preceding phases of this argument. And as he did in these two cases, he here assumes the principle without proof. As far as his argument is concerned, it offers no reason why the will should not remain "indifferent", in the sense of being independent of determination, during its choice.

c. The Necessity of Volitions

The fourth phase of Edwards' argument, based on the nature of causation, consists in a proof of his positive position. Having completed his attack on the Arminian theory of volition as expressed by the terms, self-determination, contingency, and liberty of indifference, he attempts by

direct argument to show that no volition takes place "without a Necessity of consequence, or an infallible connection with any thing foregoing." ⁷⁴

As the first step in this argument he reminds us of the proof he has given that no event, volitions included, takes place without a cause. From this fact he deduces the proposition that no event takes place without an antecedent cause. This conclusion follows because "those things which have a cause, or a reason of their existence, must be connected with their cause." ⁷⁵ Unless there is a necessary connection between an event and its cause the event is not really dependent upon the cause. "And to say, the event is not dependent on its cause, is absurd; it is the same thing as to say, it is not its cause, nor the event the effect of it." ⁷⁶ Further, "If there are some events which are not necessarily connected with their causes, then it will follow, that there are some things which come to pass without any cause." ⁷⁷ This is obvious since there is no reason for an event's coming to pass, if, being disconnected with its cause, it might not have come to pass. "To suppose there are some events which have a cause and ground of their existence, that yet are not necessarily connected with their cause, is to suppose that they have a cause which is not their cause." ⁷⁸ For since, having no connection with their cause, these events may or may not follow them, their

⁷⁴ Edwards, Enquiry, Works, Vol. I, p. 194.
⁷⁶ *ibid*, p. 195.

⁷⁷ *ibid*, p. 195.

⁷⁵ *ibid*, p. 194.
⁷⁸ *ibid*, p. 196.

occurrence or non-occurrence must be due to something which is not their cause,- which is a manifest contradiction. From these things it follows that every event occurs as the result of an antecedent cause.

We have quoted Edwards rather fully in the preceding paragraph in order that his type of reasoning on the basic proposition of his argument may be clearly revealed. Here for the first time he purports to offer a proof of the principle that all events follow preceding causes. Now with his position that all events are caused we have no disagreement. That all events are necessarily connected with their causes we can also agree, this being in reality only another way of saying that all events have causes. Given the event, there is no denying its connection with its cause.

But has Edwards succeeded hereby in separating cause and effect so as to make the former always distinct from, and prior to the latter? Why does such a position necessarily follow from a recognition of the connection between cause and effect? It is at least conceivable that cause and effect should be the same, or, if one chooses to put it this way, that there should be a self-originate event. This would not be to say either that any event is uncaused or that any effect is disjoined from its cause. It would be only to say that there are some events in which cause and effect do not form a sequence. With this as a possibility then, it cannot be concluded without further proof that the fact of the connection between cause and effect implies universally a temporal sequence and real distinction between

them. Edwards in reality here assumes this fundamental principle, offering no proof of the real point at issue. So strong is his conviction that the nature of causation implies invariably a cause antecedent to its effect that he forgets the debatable character of the proposition. To say every event has a cause is for him equivalent^{to} saying that it has a preceding cause.

Not only is the principle assumed here, but it has been assumed all through this argument. In the criticisms of the self-determination of the will, of contingency, and of the liberty of indifference, there has not even been an attempt at proof. We thus come to the end of the argument from the nature of causation, having looked in vain for a valid refutation of the central position of the Arminians. Not only is this so, but the proof of Edwards' own position is equally inconclusive. Indeed, the proposition assumed as the basis of his criticism of his opponents' position is nothing else than his own position, the principle which should have been the conclusion, not the major premise of his positive argument. Apart from his exposure of the impossibility of a completely indifferent choice, he begs the whole question. "Edwards' argument", says A.V.G.Allen, "against the freedom of the human will, in the sense of a power to choose between good and evil, gains its force from the assumption of the thing to be proved. There is no movement in his thought beyond this assumption that every event must have some external cause."⁷⁹

⁷⁹A.V.G.Allen, Life and Writings of Jonathan Edwards, p.289.

The almost naive manner in which Edwards plants his feet upon this principle reveals how completely his thinking moved in the empirical realm. That man could be viewed as a part of nature, and the workings of his spirit be cognized under the laws of the natural world, it never entered his mind to doubt. He, therefore, never hesitated to apply the law of cause and effect as manifested in the empirical world to the problem of human conduct, and could not but feel it absurd for some to insist upon making man an exception to this law. Sincere in his conviction to the utmost, the possibility of an alternative position, which would place man above the empirical world, seems not to have occurred to him.

2. The Argument from God's Foreknowledge

The second major proof of the necessity of volitions is based on the foreknowledge of God. It is an argument which, to Edwards, is absolutely final, and upon which, in the view of A.V.G.Allen,⁸⁰ he places his chief reliance.

The reasoning is divided into two steps, (a) the proof of God's universal foreknowledge, and (b) the inference from this fact of the necessity of foreknown volitions.

a. The Foreknowledge of God.

Edwards remarks as he begins this section that it should be needless to argue the fact of the divine prescience of the acts of moral agents to any who profess to be

⁸⁰A.V.G.Allen, op. cit., p. 290.

Christians. To him it is an essential and self-evident characteristic of a theistic God. Nevertheless, for those who need it, he is ready with proof, and this he presents under five heads.

(1) The first proof is based on God's prediction of men's volitions. If God does not foreknow, He cannot foretell. This is laid down as an axiom, along with the further statement that, if God does not certainly foreknow the future volitions of moral agents, He cannot foreknow those events which are dependent on them, however many and significant these may be. To show that God does predict the free acts of moral agents and also events dependent upon them Edwards fills pages with citations of such predictions from Scripture. Even to one who is disposed to question certain Scriptural instances of prediction he takes for granted, the cumulative argument is impressive. There are enough bona fide instances in Scripture to make a strong case for God's foreknowledge.

(2) The second argument is that "if God does not foreknow the Volitions of moral Agents, then he did not foreknow the fall of man, nor of angels, and so could not foreknow the great things which are consequent on these events; such as his sending his Son into the world..."⁸¹ But, as a matter of fact, the Scripture proves that He did foreknow the fall, and innumerable other things which, to a greater or lesser extent, are consequent upon it.

⁸¹ Edwards, Enquiry, Works, Vol. I, p. 230.

(3) If, says Edwards, in his third proof, God is ignorant of the future volitions of men, "it will follow, that God must in many cases truly repent what he has done, so as properly to wish he had done otherwise."⁸² For many events would happen "quite otherwise than he was before aware of",⁸³ and contrary to His desire; and thus He would be exposed to disappointment in governing the world, to perplexity and vexation.

(4) Furthermore, he continues, God would be under the necessity of constantly changing His mind. Not being aware of what is going to take place, He would have continually to adapt Himself. "For his purposes, even as to the main parts of his scheme, such as belong to the state of his moral kingdom, must be always liable to be broken, through want of foresight; and he must be continually putting his system to rights, as it gets out of order, through the contingency of the actions of moral Agents: He must be a Being, who, instead of being absolutely immutable, must necessarily be the subject of infinitely the most numerous acts of repentance, and changes of intention, of any being whatsoever."⁸⁴

(5) In the fifth proof Edwards points out a further consequence of the view that God's foreknowledge is limited, namely, the fact that a God who cannot foresee is liable to failure in His purpose in creation. "If this notion of God's

⁸²Edwards, Enquiry, Works, Vol. I, p. 231.

⁸³ibid, p. 231.

⁸⁴ibid, p. 232.

ignorance of future Volitions of moral Agents be thoroughly considered in its consequences, it will appear to follow from it, that God, after he had made the world, was liable to be wholly frustrated of his end in the creation of it; and so has been, in like manner, liable to be frustrated of his end in all the great works he had wrought." ⁸⁵ God's end in creation is a moral one, involving the right use of their powers by moral agents. If God cannot foreknow everything that will take place, the possibility of man's continued misuse of these powers and final rejection of the good, in whatever form revealed, remains. God is reduced to the same situation as the creature, who, through limited knowledge no less than through limited ability, is always uncertain of the successful culmination of his efforts. The sending of Christ and all else that God has done in prosecution of His designs would be in the nature of an experiment, the success of which would always be in doubt.

Of these proofs Edwards has given, the first two are Biblical, and the last three, philosophical. To some minds the first two will not carry ^{great} weight. However, to one who retains even an attenuated belief in the Scripture, they cannot be wholly dismissed as relics of pre-critical days. The God revealed in the Bible is not a God of finite knowledge,- He sees the end from the beginning.

The last three arguments reveal the implication of the view that limits God's foresight. Obviously, if we accept

the theistic position, this must ipso facto rule out a God of finite knowledge. But even leaving this consideration aside, a God who is liable to be sorry for what He has done, change His mind, and above all be frustrated in His purposes, can hardly be the object of Christian faith. The last two proofs Edwards gives are particularly cogent. A God of limited knowledge must be mutable and liable to failure, neither of which prospects can be acceptable to the Christian who is jealous of God's attributes and of His sovereignty in the world. The pluralist may be content with a certain amount of mutability in God, but such is certainly not consonant with the Biblical conception or the demands of personal faith. The pluralist may likewise convince himself that a God who foresees only possibilities and not certainties can, by dint of wise maneuvering, contrive to bring His plans to fruition; but, as we shall have occasion to argue later, so long as the triumph of evil remains a distinct possibility, it is futile to talk of the certain fruition of God's efforts. The liability of His being frustrated is the paramount objection to a limitation of His foreknowledge. Such a liability, and therefore such a limitation, the Christian who stakes his all upon God simply cannot admit.

b. The Foreknowledge of God and the Necessity of Volitions

Having shown that God foreknows all our volitions, Edwards proceeds to argue from this that they are necessary.

His first proof is based on the indissoluble connection between certain foreknowledge and the volitions foreknown.

"It is very evident", he says, "that, with regard to a thing whose existence is infallibly and indissolubly connected with something which already hath, or has had existence, the existence of that thing is necessary."⁸⁶ Foreknowledge, he points out, being a thing which already has existence, must for that very reason be regarded as existing necessarily. This, however, is of no importance to his argument, the validity of which does not depend upon the fact that foreknowledge exists necessarily, but upon the connection between existing foreknowledge and the volitions foreknown. Such connection, he reasons, is ample proof that the volitions must be necessary events. "It is no less evident", he says, "that if there be a full, certain, and infallible Foreknowledge of the future existence of the volitions of moral agents, then there is a certain, infallible and indissoluble connection between those events and that Foreknowledge; and that therefore, by the preceding observations, those events are necessary events."⁸⁷

Now quite obviously there is a relation of some kind between foreknowledge and the event foreknown. But this is not to say that it is the kind of connection from which we can infer the necessity of the event. As Dr. Whitby argued, this inference is possible only if it is true that the relation is a causal one, the foreknowledge being the cause of the event. What ground have we for asserting, from the mere fact of its connection with foreknowledge, that a

⁸⁶ Edwards, Enquiry, Works, Vol. I, p. 235.

⁸⁷ *ibid*, p. 236.

volition is determined by something antecedent, unless it is understood that the determinant is the foreknowledge itself? In fact Edwards has no right to lay it down as an axiom that an event indissolubly connected with a preceding necessary event is itself necessary, except upon the presupposition that the second event is necessary in virtue of being the effect of the first. Without this presupposition this principle cannot serve as the basis of an argument, but must itself stand in need of proof. It is entirely possible for a future event to be connected with something which already exists in such a way as to imply the future existence of the event, without implying anything as to its being a necessary event. Certainly this is true in the case of the connection between foreknowledge and the event foreknown. "No knowledge, however infallible, has any influence at all upon its object, nor does it make it either more or less certain, fixed, or necessary, than it would have been if it had not been known or foreknown." ⁸⁷

Edwards is of course not prepared to admit a causal influence in God's foreknowledge, although, after giving two more arguments for his thesis, to which we shall later advert, he goes so far as to point out in three corollaries that decreed events are no more necessary, nor inconsistent with human liberty, nor fatalistic than certainly foreknown events. He replies to Whitby's argument that foreknowledge,

⁸⁷W. A. Copinger, A Treatise on Predestination, Election and Grace, p. 122.

being only knowledge, cannot exercise causal influence on anything, by insisting that his own argument does not imply such causal influence. Later on indeed he definitely states his agreement with Whitby as to the causal efficacy in foreknowledge. "I allow what Dr. Whitby says to be true, that mere Knowledge does not affect the thing known, to make it more certain or more future."⁸⁸ But this, although he fails to realize it, is a fatal admission, bound, as we have seen, to cut the nerve of the whole argument as he has been presenting it. We cannot infer a volition to be necessary from its connection with a foreknowledge which is not its cause.

Edwards strives, however, to prove that we can. "Infallible Foreknowledge", he urges, "may prove the Necessity of the event foreknown, and yet not be the thing which causes the Necessity."⁸⁹ If the foreknowledge is absolute, the event must be a necessary one, because if not the foreknowledge of it would not be infallible. This holds true whether the necessity arises from the foreknowledge or vice versa: so long as we are given infallible knowledge of an event, that event is a necessary one, regardless of how the necessity arises. Certain foreknowledge, indeed, proves no more than certain "after-knowledge", but then certain "after-knowledge" implies the truth of the event certainly known. In fact it is only the certainty in the things themselves which makes possible the certainty of the fore-

⁸⁸ Edwards, *Enquiry, Works*, Vol. I, pp 243-44. ⁸⁹ *ibid*, p.241.

knowledge. "There must be a certainty in things themselves, before they are certainly known, or, which is the same thing, known to be certain. For certainty of Knowledge is nothing else but knowing or discerning the certainty there is in the things themselves, which are known."⁹⁰ This is the clearest statement of his answer to Whitby. What he is saying is that certain future existence of the event is an indispensable condition of certain foreknowledge of it. If, he adds, we regard the foreknown event as the cause of the foreknowledge, and not merely its condition, the argument is not weakened. In reality it is strengthened, "because it shows the existence of the event to be so settled and firm that it is as if it had already been."⁹¹

But Edwards' denial of causal efficiency in God's foreknowledge has eviscerated this whole argument. The fallacy in it is apparent. He is confusing the idea of an event whose existence is certain with that of one whose existence is necessitated by an antecedent event. We may readily grant that a certain and infallible foreknowledge implies beyond all shadow of a doubt the future existence of the foreknown event. But it does not follow that an event whose existence is certain is a necessary, determined event. To prove it such means proving it to be an effect of a cause antecedent to it. But there is no possible way to infer from the fact that the future existence of an event is a condition or cause of certain foreknowledge the further fact that it is

⁹⁰ Edwards, Enquiry, Works, Vol. I, p. 243. ⁹¹ *ibid*, p. 244.

an event determined by something antecedent. We must distinguish between certainty and necessity. Although we grant with Edwards that certain foreknowledge proves it is "impossible the event should not be", we must bear in mind that this impossibility consists solely in the fact that its not being would involve a contradiction of the certain foreknowledge. It is a logical and not an ontological impossibility. The existence of the foreknown event may be certain whether the event be contingent or determined.

Edwards' second proof of the fact that "foreknowledge infers necessity" is much more cogent than this one with which we have just been dealing. Briefly stated, the argument is that a future event can be foreseen only by means of its connection with the past. He begins with the statement that "it is impossible for a thing to be certainly known to any intellect without evidence."⁹² For a thing to be evident, he explains, is for an understanding to "see evidence" of it. But, he continues, a future contingent event is without all evidence. It cannot be self-evident, for this means that it must either have present existence, or exist by the necessity of its nature, both of which characteristics are contradictory to the idea of a future contingent event. Nor can it have a second sort of evidence, which he calls "proof", that is, evidence consisting in its connection with something preceding which is evident, for by definition a contingent event is one which is unconnected with the past.

⁹²Edwards, Enquiry, Works, Vol. I, p.236.

Hence since there is neither self-evidence nor "proof" of the future existence of a contingent event, "the thing in reality is not evident; and so cannot be seen to be evident, or, which is the same thing, cannot be known." ⁹³

No one could possibly deny that for a thing to be certainly known it must be evident,- it must be apparent. It may be questioned, however, whether a thing's being evident means that we must "see evidence" of it in Edwards' sense. If so, then quite obviously only a necessary event can be foreseen, for his argument is conclusive as to the fact that a future contingent event could not possess such evidence. It could not be self-evident in either of the two senses in which, according to him, an event may be self-evident, nor could it be evident through connection with anything else. As a matter of fact, Edwards' argument really defines an evident event as a necessary event, for the things which he holds give an event evidence, namely, present existence, necessity of nature, and connection with something else, are the very features he has previously cited as those which make an event necessary.

The question then arises whether an event may not be foreknown by God without being evident in any of these ways. To answer summarily, there seems to be no reason why it may not. The reason Edwards insists upon the necessity of God's seeing "proof", if He is to have certain foreknowledge, is that he conceives of God's foreknowledge as analogous to our

⁹³ Edwards, Enquiry, Works, Vol. I, p. 237.

knowledge of truths for which we have no empirical evidence, and which have therefore to be proved by a process of deductive reasoning. In connection with another problem he says: "If none of the moral actions of intelligent beings are influenced by either previous Inclination or Motive, another strange thing will follow; and this is, that God not only cannot foreknow any of the future moral actions of his creatures, but he can make no conjecture, can give no probable guess concerning them." ⁹⁴ This being the case, it is quite natural that he should deny the possibility of God's having certain foreknowledge without seeing "proof" in the form of a necessary connection between the event in question and something preceding. But may not a future contingent event have for God an evidence analogous to that an empirical object we perceive has for us? If so, then no "proof" is necessary. The fact that I perceive an empirical object is sufficient evidence for me that it exists. Quite true, I may perceive it as interpreted in the light of my previous experience, but that is not to say that in any sense I infer it from that experience. I perceive it as interpreted, and I require no further evidence of its existence beyond the fact that I have a direct apprehension of it. Now God may be conceived as knowing all things, past, present, and future, in a manner analogous to our apprehension of an empirical object. He may envision all things by a direct, intuitive gaze. All things would then be evident to Him,

⁹⁴ Edwards, Enquiry, Works, Vol. I, p. 312.

that is, they would be apparent, and He would need no further evidence of them beyond the fact that He knows them. His foreknowledge of a future event would thus be sufficient evidence of its taking place, without His having to perceive a connection between the event and an antecedent cause that gives rise to it.

The doctrine of the specious present, that we ourselves apprehend time, not as a series of non-durational units, but as a span of duration, suggests what is perhaps an even closer analogy than that above. If, as seems true, this is the only theory which will adequately explain our time-experience, we are at any moment conscious of a duration-span including an "after" preceded by a "before" which is in a certain sense future to the "after". "The practically cognized present is no knife-edge, but a saddle-back with a certain breadth of its own on which we sit perched, and from which we look into two directions into time. The unit of composition of our perception of time is a duration, - with a bow and a stern, as it were - a rearward and a forward-looking end. It is only as parts of this duration-block that the relation of succession of one end to the other is perceived. We do not first feel one end and then feel the other after it, and from the perception of the succession infer an interval of time between, but we seem to feel the interval of time as a whole with its two ends imbedded in it."⁹⁵ Thus our own direct apprehension of the "before" included in any "duration-block" of our temporal

⁹⁵William James, quoted by Pringle-Pattison, in *The Idea of God in the Light of Recent Psychology*, pp 352-353.

consciousness, the evidence for which is in no way based on our discerning its connection with the "after", yields us an experience comparable, however slightly, to God's immediate knowledge of future events. "In the compresence which is thus an essential feature of our consciousness of time we therefore already realize, though doubtless on an infinitesimal scale, the nature of an eternal consciousness." ⁹⁶

It is entirely compatible with the theistic position,- I should hold that it is necessary to it,- for us to conceive God as sustaining a relation to time such as would make it possible for Him to have a direct foreknowledge of future events. If we can follow Professor Pringle-Pattison, as it seems we must, in holding that the eternal consciousness comprehends in its purview the whole time span, then it should follow that God can contemplate past and future simultaneously with the present. This is not to say that our time-experience is illusory or unmeaningful in the mind of God. On the contrary the temporal process, which is a real and necessary condition of the existence of finite minds, must be retained in the eternal experience of God. Yet, as Professor Pringle-Pattison goes on to say, it is somehow also transcended by the divine experience. The different stages of the time-process may be viewed by God, as he suggests, as elements in a completed purpose.

This is not the place to assay the difficult task of elaborating and defending any particular theory of the rela-

⁹⁶A. S. Pringle-Pattison, *The Idea of God*, p. 354.

tion of the temporal and the eternal. Suffice it to say that the position suggested does at least have the virtue of safeguarding the validity of our time-experience, while keeping God in relation to time without placing Him in time. And it does show that it is not impossible to conceive of God's having a knowledge of the future as immediate as that of the present.

But we need not stop with showing the possibility of the foreknowledge of contingent events. Let us examine the implications of the position taken by those who deny it. Why do they hold that God can have certain foreknowledge of a future event only by discerning its connection with something else? The only conceivable reason is that they regard God as knowing future events by inferring them from their antecedents. This is implied all through Edwards' writings and expressly stated by more recent writers who take his position on this matter. It cannot be too strongly emphasized, however, that inference is essentially a temporal process. It is the process by which knowledge is arrived at which was not possessed before. It means that we know the premises at a time when we do not know the conclusion. It implies, when it is used as the method for penetrating the future, that we are ignorant of effects at a time when we know causes. It is to be attributed, therefore, only to beings placed at a definite point in time, and whose knowledge is successive. Hence when determinists, and those indeterminists who agree with them in this respect, insist that God's foreknowledge must be based on a perceived con-

nection between the foreseen event and something preceding, they are really ascribing to Him a temporal, successive knowledge, and thus placing Him in time. And yet they must insist on this inferential foreknowledge in God, however embarrassing its implications, for it is the only real ground they have. It is the vital point, for instance, in this second argument of Edwards. Obviously, no future event, necessary or contingent, could possess what he calls "self-evidence", since no future event could have present existence or exist by a necessity of its nature. Edwards is really saying, therefore, that to be evident a future event must exhibit "proof" in the form of its connection with something else. But this is to say that God must infer the future from the past.

His third main argument from foreknowledge, to which we may now briefly advert, proceeds upon this same assumption. A contingent event, he says, is one which may or may not come to pass. This being true, if we suppose that God certainly foreknows its coming to pass, we are ascribing to God a knowledge which is inconsistent with itself. "For to say, that God certainly, and without all conjecture, knows that a thing will infallibly be, which at the same time He knows to be so contingent, that it may possibly not be, is to suppose His knowledge inconsistent with itself; or that one thing He knows, is utterly inconsistent with another thing He knows." 97

Now if we grant that a contingent event is one which may or may not come to pass, there is no answer to this argument. And it may readily be admitted that for man, as a creature in time, this is one legitimate way of defining a contingent event. For he can foreknow only by inferring the future from the past, and a contingent event is one which cannot be so inferred. But it is an entirely different matter to say that a contingent event has this character for God. If, as we have argued is entirely possible, God may have immediate knowledge of a future event, that event may be certainly foreknown by Him regardless of whether it is connected with an antecedent cause. For God, therefore, the difference between a future contingent event and a future necessary event is not that the former is one which may or may not be, but simply that it is one which does not arise entirely from the past. Hence this argument, resting as it does upon the definition of a future contingent event as one which may or may not come to pass, can stand only if we are prepared to assume that God, like us, is in time, and is therefore able to foreknow the future only by inferring it from the past. Edwards' third argument, thus reduces to the second one, which likewise started from the position that God must see evidence in the form of "proof" to foreknow a future event.

Recent thinkers who hold that "foreknowledge infers necessity", both among determinists and indeterminists, still base their argument upon this postulate. Thus professor Ward writes: "The only basis for anticipation is past

experience....Unless then God has preordained all that is to be done, it is surely a contradiction to say even of him that he has such ~~a~~ knowledge of the future as we have of the past." ⁹⁸ Ward, incidentally, quotes Edwards with strong approval: "I do not think Jonathan Edwards overstated his case, when he said:- 'There is no geometrical theorem whatsoever, more capable of strict demonstration than that God's certain Prescience of the volitions of moral agents is inconsistent with such a contingency of these events, as is without all Necessity.'" ⁹⁹ Martineau accepts it as self-evident that contingent events cannot be certainly fore-known. "If it is uncertain beforehand whether there will even be a Cyrus, a Josaiah, an Antiochus, a Judas (and this depends on innumerable volitions), or, if there be doubts how each will deal with his opportunities and his temptations, prediction of his place and behavior in history will be impossible: and if the prediction has been made and verified, it can only have been by the exclusion of contingency: a thing known for certain cannot be uncertain." ¹⁰⁰ The postulate underlying this is that what God knows of the future He infers from the past.

Clearly, then, we can deny divine foreknowledge of future contingent events only if we are prepared to ascribe to God an inferential knowledge, characterized by the same temporal limitations as ours. But can the Christian theist

⁹⁸ James Ward, *The Realm of Ends*, p. 474.

⁹⁹ *ibid.*, p. 312.

¹⁰⁰ James Martineau, *A Study of Religion*, Vol. II, Bk. IV, p. 278.

afford to do this? A God who is in any sense transcendent cannot be brought within the time process like His creatures, and reduced to the necessity of gaining knowledge of the future in the very way made necessary to them because of their finitude. One wonders that a thinker like Martineau is not alive to this difficulty in his position, but he ignores it completely, concerning himself solely with the effort to reconcile limited foreknowledge with a providential government of the world. Even those who agree that he has succeeded in this can hardly fail to be aware that he has left untouched the far more difficult task of showing how Christian theism can content itself with a God whose relation to time is no different from that of His creatures. However modest and tentative our notions about the nature of time must be, one thing we can affirm, that a transcendent God is not limited by it as we are. And however different those notions may be,- whether for instance we follow Kant in making it the subjective form of intuition, or Bergson in conceiving it as a series of heterogeneous states permeating one another in succession but without distinction, or common sense in viewing it as a homogeneous spatialized medium in which events are spread out,- must we not at least agree that the Creator and His creatures view time from different standpoints? If so, then the fundamental argument of Edwards and his successors, who deny divine intuitive foreknowledge of future contingent events, will have to be abandoned.

Edwards' opponents insisted that a view like his

implies a successiveness in God's knowledge. That Edwards did not realize this implication of his argument is evident ~~from~~ the fact that he denies making God's knowledge successive, and goes on to say that its unsuccessiveness does not weaken the argument that "foreknowledge infers necessity." "So that it is manifest that there being no proper succession in God's mind, makes no alteration as to the Necessity of the existence of the events known."¹⁰¹ But he is manifestly wrong in denying that his theory makes God's knowledge successive, as we have already endeavored to show. He is also wrong in saying that foreknowledge implies necessity as much, if it is unsuccessive, as if it is successive. For if God sees all things at once, there is no reason for Him to infer one thing from another, and therefore no reason why He may not foresee an event that arises spontaneously as easily as He foresees one that is necessary.

It may be pointed out here that while unsuccessiveness in God's foreknowledge makes it impossible to infer necessity from such knowledge, we do not mean to say that it is inconsistent with the foresight of necessary events. We quite agree with Edwards that God has an unsuccessive knowledge of all the relations between things, and that He sees the connection between cause and effect. But then we hold that He sees the effect as connected with its cause, and not because of its connection. God sees the conclusion as soon as the premises, so to speak, and while He understands the relations

¹⁰¹ Edwards, Enquiry, Works, Vol. I, p. 246.

between them, He does not have to go through the process of deduction.

It has been said that to hold to the conception of an immediate foreknowledge of the future is to give up a perfectly intelligible explanation of God's foreknowledge and to take refuge in a mysterious doctrine which is impregnable only because it is mysterious. We trust that what has gone before is a sufficient reply to this criticism. Two further observations, however, may be made. In the first place, it is simply not true that the notion of immediate foreknowledge is thoroughly mysterious and unintelligible. We have already shown that in our empirical experience, especially in our consciousness of the 'before' in the specious present, we have close analogies to it. The notion itself is clear-cut and understandable, even though the understanding of how such knowledge takes place may be beyond us. But, second, are we not to expect some mystery when dealing with the things of God? Is not the fact of divine omniscience with respect to present events completely beyond our power to explain on the analogy of our experience? Indeed, it is as mysterious, once we stop to think of it, as divine foreknowledge of future events, and yet we accept it because we believe God infinite. And do we not accept mysteries on every hand? If we admit the mystery of creation, the mystery of the incarnation, the mystery of the Trinity, why should we renege when we run upon some mystery in the way God knows the future? We need not even go to God to discover a mystery in the knowing process. I apprehend a book lying

on my desk, but just how and why I have this awareness is beyond me. I know certain conditions it requires, and certain things that take place when it occurs, but this is by no means completely to answer the how and the why of the process. Why then should I insist that the last shred of mystery be torn from God's ways of knowing? When we try to explain away the mystery of how He knows the future, we can do so only by describing His foreknowledge in terms of our finite experience, and that is to say, only by sacrificing His transcendence.

3. The Argument from the Moral Nature of Man

The third major argument advanced by Edwards in support of his theory of the will is based on the implications of man's moral agency. He begins with an effort to prove the position that moral inability is not only compatible with moral responsibility, but actually demanded by it as its sole adequate basis. After this he moves into an attack on the Arminian theory, endeavoring to show its inadequacy as a basis of moral agency.

a. The Consistency of Moral Inability and Responsibility

In his effort to show that a man who is morally unable is none the less responsible for his conduct, Edwards has recourse to a number of theological arguments. The first is based on the necessity of God's volitions. God, he says, is praiseworthy for His holiness, although all His volitions are necessitated by His nature. If it is true then that God is

morally responsible, there is no reason why it should not be true of the man whose acts are determined. To deny the fact that a determined act is a matter of moral responsibility is to deny God credit for His holiness.

A second argument is based on the necessity of Christ's sinlessness. That His sinlessness was necessary, Edwards insists, is proved by the promises made by God to Him, by the promises to the church conditioned upon His conduct, and by the promises of Christ Himself to His followers which were predicated on His conduct. Now these promises, which were certain to be fulfilled, would not have been certain had not Christ's sinlessness been certain, that is to say, necessary. Yet notwithstanding the necessity of His volitions, Christ was subject to commands, etc., deserving of reward, and thus fully responsible. It follows that any man whose acts are determined may also be responsible.

Again, God, according to the Scripture, has given up certain men to sin. In explanation of this Edwards remarks that "hereby is certainly meant God so ordering or disposing things, in some respect or other, either by doing or forbearing to do, as that the consequences should be men continuing in their sins."¹⁰² In spite of this fact that God Himself renders these sins necessary, they are nevertheless charged up to those who commit them.

These three theological arguments, while they may have carried some weight with Edwards' contemporaries, are not

¹⁰² Edwards, Enquiry, Works, Vol. I, p. 272.

convincing today. To reason from the nature of God to the nature of man is an extremely precarious procedure. We may well grant that God deserves credit for volitions which are determined by His nature, but then God must in some sense be ultimately responsible for His nature. He at least did not come by His in the way in which we inherit our natures, which, according to Edwards, determine all our acts. As for the argument from the sinlessness of Christ, the fact that the promises made to Him and by Him were certain to be fulfilled does not prove His conduct to have been necessitated. To foreknow with certainty does not mean that the foreknown is necessary. That it can be said of Christ 'non posse peccare', is a highly questionable position to use as a basis for argument. Even if this be granted, His uniqueness as an individual should make us wary of too easily arguing from Him to ourselves. And finally, the argument that God holds men responsible for sins He has predetermined is a case of begging the question. That we are blameworthy for necessary sins is precisely the point at issue.

In Part IV of the Enquiry Edwards makes an attempt to show that necessity is compatible with moral responsibility by an appeal to "common sense", or as we would say today, to experience. His argument is thus not completely metaphysical and theological, as some of his commentators have said. Recognizing the popular prejudice against the position that we are responsible for determined volitions, he endeavors to account for it by the fact that "natural" and "moral" necessity are commonly confused in the popular mind. Common

sense tells us that we are not responsible in the case of natural necessity. "If men do things which in themselves are very good, fit to be brought to pass, and attended with very happy effects, properly against their wills; or do them from a necessity that is without their wills, or with which their wills have no concern or connection; then it is a plain dictate of common sense, that such doings are none of their virtue, nor have they any moral good in them."¹⁰³ But moral necessity involving no hindrance to, nor constraint of will is a different matter. Once the confusion between natural and moral necessity has been cleared up it will, as a matter of fact, be found that the attribution of moral responsibility to a morally necessitated act "is not at all inconsistent with the natural apprehensions of mankind, and that sense of things which is found everywhere in the common people; who are furthest from having their thoughts perverted from their natural channel, by metaphysical and philosophical subtilties."¹⁰⁴

To back up this statement Edwards undertakes to show wherein the popular notion of desert consists, illustrating by the common idea of blameworthiness. To let him speak for himself: "The idea which the common people, through all ages and nations, have of faultiness, I suppose to be plainly this; a person being or doing wrong, with his own will and pleasure; containing these two things: 1. His doing wrong, when he does as he pleases. 2. His pleasure being wrong."

¹⁰³ Edwards, Enquiry, Works, Vol. I, p. 333. ¹⁰⁴ *ibid*, p. 339.

Or, in other words, perhaps more intelligibly expressing their Notion; a person having his heart wrong, and doing wrong from his heart."¹⁰⁵ This implies for the common man, he explains, that the act is the agent's own act, which, however, is only to say that the agent does it "of choice". There is not involved in this any speculation as to the cause of volitions. The act must be performed in "the exercise of liberty",¹⁰⁶ but this means simply that the agent must be able to "do as he pleases without considering how his pleasure comes to be as it is."¹⁰⁷

Far from implying liberty in the Arminian sense as a basis for responsibility, the influence of "the heart", of inclinations, argues Edwards, is demanded by common sense. "Men do not think a good act to be the less praiseworthy, for the agent being much determined in it by a good inclination or a good motive, but the more. And if the good inclination, or motive, has but little influence in determining the agent, they do not think his act so much the more virtuous, but the less. And so concerning evil acts, which are determined by evil motives or inclinations."¹⁰⁸ Action, to be good or evil, must express the character of the agent. This is the dictate of common sense, except in those "that have darkened their own minds with confused metaphysical speculation."¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁵Edwards, Enquiry, Works, Vol. I, p. 339.

¹⁰⁶ibid, p. 340.

¹⁰⁷ibid, p. 427.

¹⁰⁸ibid, pp 342-343.

¹⁰⁹ibid, p. 340.

b. The Incompatibility of Freedom in the Arminian Sense and Moral Responsibility.

Having endeavored to show that we may be held responsible for necessary volitions, Edwards now launches into an attack on the Arminian conception as a basis of moral responsibility. He directs the attack first at their notion that a liberty of indifference is essential to acts for which we can be held responsible.

An indifferent choice, he reminds us, has been shown to be an impossibility. But even assuming that it might be possible, no act performed in a state of indifference could be moral on the Arminian view, because it would not be self-determined. An indifferent act must be free of all determination, whereas, when the will determines itself, each act is determined by a preceding act. On the other hand, if the act is self-determined, it cannot be indifferent, and therefore cannot have moral quality. Hence the implication of the Arminian position, on the basis of its own principles, is that there can be no ethical quality attaching to man. This brief argument Edwards does not stress, and we need not stop to consider, inasmuch as the principle on which it rests has already been examined.

Again, he says, assuming that indifference is possible, it will follow that the entire self must be indifferent during the act, if it is to be deemed either virtuous or vicious. The heart must be perfectly free from tendencies or inclinations of any kind. "And so it will follow, that in order to the virtue of an act, the heart must be indifferent in the time of the performance of that act, and the more

indifferent and cold the heart is with relation to the act performed, so much the better; because the act is performed with so much the greater Liberty."¹¹⁰ Likewise the mind must be indifferent in its judgments as regards the character of the act. "And not only so, but for the will to be in a state of perfect equilibrium with respect to such crimes, is for the mind to be in such a state, as to be full as likely to choose them as to refuse them, to do them as to omit them."¹¹¹ An indifferent will, then, implies an indifferent self.

This criticism is invalid. The Arminian held that the will acts independently of the least influence of heart and intellect. This, as we have seen, was his fundamental meaning in speaking of it as indifferent. And since it is utterly independent, its indifference would not affect the state of the heart and mind. Edwards has good ground for holding that such indifference is impossible, but to say that it must, if existent, involve the entire self is simply to misinterpret the Arminian's theory.

Having noted these preliminary thrusts at his opponents, let us move now into the really significant criticism he brings against them. The Arminian doctrine, he points out, is inconsistent with the existence of habits, inclinations, etc., possessing moral quality. This follows in the first instance from the fact that tendencies or inclinations in themselves can possess no moral quality. Nothing, according to

¹¹⁰ Edwards, Enquiry, Works, Vol. I, p. 299. ¹¹¹ *Ibid*, p. 301.

them, can possess moral quality in which freedom is not involved, but freedom, being indifference, cannot reside in any dispositions of the heart "which are contrary to Indifference, and imply in their nature the very destruction and exclusion of it."¹¹² Further, habitual bias is inimical to moral agency in the will. Habitual bias is incompatible with the notion of a self-determining power in the will, and since the latter is necessary to moral agency, habitual bias is opposed to moral agency. "In estimating the degree of Virtue or Vice, no more must be considered than what arises from self-determining power, without any influence of that Bias, because Liberty is exercised in no more: so that all that is the exercise of habitual Inclination, is thrown away, as not belonging to the morality of the action."¹¹³ If the inclination is strong enough to necessitate the acts of will, all self-determination or contingency is excluded and moral agency cannot exist at all. And, further, "If very strong Habits destroy Liberty, the lesser ones proportionably hinder it, according to their degree of strength."¹¹⁴ It will follow from the Arminian position "that then is the act most virtuous or vicious, when performed without any Inclination or habitual Bias at all; because it is then performed with most Liberty."¹¹⁵ Being in their own nature devoid of moral quality, and in their effect upon the will destructive of it, there is no place in the Arminian scheme

¹¹² Edwards, Enquiry, Works, Vol. I, p. 301.

¹¹³ *ibid*, p. 303.

¹¹⁴ *ibid*, p. 302.

¹¹⁵ *ibid*, p. 302.

for good or evil tendencies of the heart. The mere statement of this position, however, is sufficient to show its absurdity. Common sense tells us beyond all doubt that there is such a thing as a good heart or a bad heart.

The same considerations which make moral quality inconsistent, on the Arminian theory, with inclinations of the heart, etc., rule out the possibility of the operation of motives. For a motive to determine volition would be for it to make the volition perfectly non-moral, and for it to influence volition would be for it to exclude moral agency to the degree of its influence. "If a thousand degrees of Motive abolish all liberty, then five hundred take it half away."¹¹⁶ But without a motive, he continues, an act is without end or intention, it is a blind and purposeless action, and can therefore not be called a moral act. The real result of Arminianism is to exclude moral agency altogether. "For it is absurd in itself, and contrary to common sense, to suppose a virtuous act of mind without any good intention or aim; and, by their principles, it is absurd to suppose a virtuous act with a good intention or aim; for to act for an end, is to act from a Motive."¹¹⁷

In the foregoing criticisms Edwards is condemning the Arminians on two grounds, (1) for denying any moral quality in the dispositions, inclinations, etc. in our nature, and (2) for denying any influence of the heart or motives to be

¹¹⁶ Edwards, Enquiry, Works, Vol. I, p. 308.
¹¹⁷ *ibid*, p. 311.

compatible with responsible moral choice. As to the first criticism, he is really misrepresenting their position. They did not deny the existence of evil and good dispositions, etc; on the contrary they as a rule recognized that the fall of Adam had impaired man's nature. The Remonstrance, of 1610, even went so far as to say that man could not do anything good, or exercise saving faith, without the regenerating influence of the Holy Spirit. What they did deny was man's responsibility for these non-voluntary tendencies in his make-up. We are not responsible outside the sphere of our freedom, they insisted, but this still leaves it possible for moral attributes to be predicated of our inclinations, habits, etc.

If Edwards misses the mark in failing to see this, he finds the most vulnerable spot in the whole Arminian theory when he condemns it for rejecting the influence of our nature and of all motives upon our volitions. The idea of a self-determining, indifferent will is utterly inconsistent with any sort of influence. It is a will acting in vacuo. The Arminian in reality abstracts the will from the rest of the self, leaving it only a bare capacity for action, independent of the agent's nature or mind. As a result its acts, being insulated against the influence of the heart, express nothing of the agent's character,- in fact, cannot be said to belong to the agent. Being isolated also from the influence of motive, Edwards rightly says it is purposeless, expressing no rational intention of the self, aiming at no end. The volition is thus left a characterless, non-

rational exercise of abstract power. But no act is a moral act which does not express the agent's character, and is not led by the guiding light of an intelligent purpose. Edwards has therefore done a genuine service in exposing so cogently the defects of the Arminian theory as a basis of responsible moral agency.

But apart altogether from its inadequacy from the ethical point of view, this theory is a nest of psychological fallacies,- a weakness which Edwards did not emphasize nor completely grasp. The bare, abstract will in which the libertarian locates the power of choice is arrived at in reality by the analytical method of the determinist, and belongs to the now obsolete psychology which splits the self up into various faculties. It is the attribution of power to a nonentity. "The will itself has no real objective existence, except in its embodiment in an act, and only in the moment of the act."¹¹⁸ Locke was correct when he said that it is as proper to say that "it is the singing faculty sings, and the dancing faculty dances, as that the will chooses." We need not agree with him and some other opponents of libertarianism that it is really a doctrine of chance, but as an approximation of true volition the acts of the abstract will are little better than chance. The libertarian has ignored the self's place in volition as completely as the determinist, who links together character, motive,

¹¹⁸W. A. Copinger, A Treatise on Predestination, Election, and Grace, p. 276.

and willing in an impersonal, causal series. Instead of rational, free choice, made by the self as a whole, what we have is a mere accidental occurrence in which nothing personal is involved. It is not the will that is free, but, if there be freedom at all, the person willing. Edwards was within his ~~rights~~ when he insisted on this point, although he himself really left the person to one side.

If we overlook his inconsistencies, and whatever deficiencies we may feel to belong to his conception of freedom, we must give Edwards full credit for taking the stand in his day, and for his earnest defense of it, that freedom belongs, not to the abstract will, but to the agent. The fact that he did not himself completely succeed in locating freedom in the agent should not overshadow the fact that he made the effort. As we follow him in his arguments against the Arminian theory we can see that, with all their fallacies, they constitute a highly significant attack on the conception of an isolated will. The following tribute overstates the value of Edwards' contribution, but in its spirit we can concur. "We owe to the Calvinist preacher, Jonathan Edwards, the clear demonstration of the impossibility in theory and the absurdity in practice of locating freedom in an abstract faculty, the will, distinguishable from the other faculties of the soul. Since his treatise, whatever conception we may form of human freedom, we recognize that there is no place in natural or moral science for caprice."¹¹⁹

¹¹⁹Herbert W. Carr, *The Free Will Problem*, pp 22-23.

In Part IV Edwards launches another criticism against the Arminian position in opposition to their claim that moral responsibility attaches only to those acts which are freely committed by the will. They assume, says Edwards, "that the virtuousness of the dispositions, or acts of the will, consists not in the nature of these dispositions, or acts of will, but wholly in the Origin or Cause of them."¹²⁰ It will follow, he then goes on to show, that there really cannot be any moral good or evil attaching to an individual. For if moral quality does not reside in the nature of things which are good or evil but only in their cause, then it will follow that the moral quality of the cause can lie only in its cause, and so on, ad infinitum. Nothing can stop the regress but an admission that the final cause is good or bad in itself, and not because of its cause, ^{an admission} which is ruled out by the initial assumption. Moral quality is therefore banished from the world, there being nothing of which it can be predicated. Edwards puts the conclusion in characteristic fashion, "And so it follows, that faultiness can lie only in that Cause, which is a Cause only, and no effect of any thing. Nor yet can it lie in this; for then it must lie in the Nature of the thing itself."¹²¹ Having exposed the absurdity of the Arminian position, he affirms his own position that the moral quality of a thing must lie in the nature of the thing itself. "It is agreeable to the natural

¹²⁰ Edwards, Enquiry, Works, Vol. I, pp 314-315.

¹²¹ *ibid*, p. 318.

notions of mankind, that moral evil, with its desert of dislike and abhorrence, and all its other ill deservings, consists in a certain deformity in the Nature of certain dispositions of the heart, and acts of the will." ¹²²

Now Edwards achieves this apparent logical victory, first by misrepresenting the Arminian position, and then by applying again the reductio ad absurdum argument we ^{have} already examined. To begin with he assumes that the Arminian, like him, makes moral responsibility coterminous with moral quality. We have seen, however, that in their view, we are responsible only for the acts of the free will, although we also possess inherited tendencies which have a moral character. Edwards, on the other hand, held that we are responsible for our inherited depravity of nature as much as for our volitions. (It is true, of course, that he regarded our depravity as in the final analysis the result of our voluntary participation in Adam's first sin.) Now in this argument against the Arminian view he ignores their distinction between our evil dispositions for which we are not blameworthy, and our volitions for which we are responsible. Assuming his own view that moral quality and responsibility are coterminous, he concludes, as he did in the argument preceding this one, that the Arminian, in limiting our responsibility to the acts of the will as a spontaneous cause, is likewise limiting all moral attributes to our volitions. On the basis of this assumption he undertakes to

¹²² Edwards, Enquiry, Works, Vol. I, p. 319.

show, not only that the Arminian denies the existence of all responsibility but also of all good and evil in man.

Again, he misrepresents the Arminian position when he attributes to them the denial that dispositions and acts of the will are in their nature good or evil. This view he foists upon them by an illegitimate inference from their limitation of our responsibility to acts of the will. They claimed that responsibility could attach only to that which is a true cause, hence only to the volitions of a free will. From this Edwards reasoned that if responsibility,- and therefore moral quality,- is attributable only to that which is a cause, it cannot consist in the nature of dispositions or acts of will which are caused. These acts and dispositions are effects of preceding causes, and must, therefore, on the Arminian view, be non-moral. On the basis of this interpretation it is easy to fix on the Arminian again, from a slightly different angle, the fallacy of the infinite series. It is obvious, however, that he achieves the reductio ad absurdum here, just as he did in the case of the self-determination of the will, by simply refusing to grant the possibility of spontaneous volitions, and thus by forcing upon the Arminian the very conception of causation he rejected. By denying spontaneous causation Edwards distinguishes between that which causes, and the act of the will caused, and thus between the cause, and the nature of the act. But for the Arminian the act of the free will is that will exercising its causative efficiency, and thus it is in its nature a moral act. Its virtue or vice consists in this

fact; and its being a blameworthy or meritorious act, an act for which we are responsible, consists in the fact that it is the act of a free cause. As for our dispositions, they are likewise good or evil in their nature, and it is only a perversion of the Arminian's teaching to represent him as denying this. Even though Edwards could prove that the Arminian does banish responsibility by limiting it to a cause, this would not affect the question of the goodness or badness of our dispositions one way or another. Had he been willing or able to grasp the conception of creative causation, he would have seen that the Arminian was with him in regarding dispositions and volitions as in their nature good or bad.

c. Observations on Edwards' Reconciliation
of Necessity and Accountability

Having recognized Edwards' success in showing the Arminian theory of freedom to be untenable on ethical grounds, the question arises whether
/he is right in assuming, as he consistently does, that there is no third alternative between it and determinism. If he is right, he is in a position to argue that, Arminianism being eliminated, we are committed to his own theory. His assumption, however, can certainly not be left unchallenged. To concede that the free will of the Arminian theory is untenable is not necessarily to deny all spontaneity, nor the possibility of attributing the power of contrary choice to the self as a whole. And likewise to recognize that a volition must express our character and possess a motive is not tantamount to admitting that it must be determined. There is the possibility at least of a third alternative in the

form of a theory of volition which includes the spontaneity insisted upon by the Arminian and also the influence of character and guidance of purpose demanded by the determinist. Our decision therefore lies, not between determinism and Arminianism, but between determinism and a theory which attributes freedom in the form of alternative choice to the agent.

In view of this possibility of a third theory Edwards' attempt to show necessity not only compatible with, but essential to moral agency, the discussion of which we have reserved to this point, takes on especial significance. For, as we have seen that his efforts to prove the necessity of volitions from the nature of causation and the foreknowledge of God were not successful. The argument that moral agency implies the determination of our volitions is thus his only remaining proof. But apart altogether from the importance with which this invests it, we really come to grips, as we examine it, with the basic problem of freedom.

Let us now consider the reasons Edwards advances in proof of his position. We have seen that, in addition to the arguments based on the necessity of volitions in God, Christ, and those given up of God to sin,- arguments which are certainly not convincing,- he advances one based on "common sense". The real/cause of the feeling that determinism is opposed to responsibility lies, he holds, in a confusion of natural and moral inability in the popular mind. However, as soon as the distinction between them is clear, he insists, no man will deny that, while natural inability

excuses, moral inability does not. But this is really no argument in proof of the compatibility of necessity and moral accountability,- it is only an explanation of the opposition to it on the part of certain people. It amounts simply to the statement that, when people understand the deterministic theory, they agree with it. This is a great deal to assume. Instead of agreeing with Edwards' position as obviously true, many people would probably find themselves wondering why, if natural inability "without doubt" excuses, the same should not be true of moral inability. For after all it is not the distinction between these which is significant, but the fact that they are both forms of inability. Whatever be the difference between the factors which cause it, and the acts which are rendered impossible by it, the inability itself is the same in both cases. Why Edwards so sweepingly asserts that we are not responsible for an outward act we cannot perform, yet fully responsible for an act of will we cannot exert, is never made clear. It would seem then that something more than clearing up the confusion between natural and moral inability is necessary, if the objection to determinism is to be removed.

Edwards does attempt this by his analysis of the common man's idea of "faultiness". This, he says, as we have seen, "is a person's being or doing wrong, with his own will and pleasure...a person having his heart wrong and doing wrong from his heart." Now both these statements would probably be accepted at face value by the common man, just as he would accept Edwards' statement that freedom means

"doing as one pleases". But the language in each case implies a selective activity, or the initiation of activity. For a man to do wrong "with his own will and pleasure", or "from his heart", or to "do as he pleases" is, it would seem, for one to originate action, or make a choice between genuine alternatives. When we are told, however, that no such spontaneity or selectivity is involved, that these expressions are in fact consistent with the full and complete determination of our motives by factors beyond our control, a protest arises in the heart. We have the feeling that we have been tricked by language. "Common sense" would hardly accept "doing as one pleases", etc., as descriptive of genuine freedom, when we are told that, even though we "do as we please", our whole day is pre-determined for us, and that the real cause of our moral victories is a relationship between our nature and circumstances over which we have no control.

We are led to accept the statements quoted above, which on their face indicate contrary choice, only to be told that they have no reference to the origin of volition, i.e., to whether it is determined or free, but that as a matter of fact any volition which expresses character, as all morally significant ones do, is determined. What his "proof" of the compatibility of responsibility and necessity in reality reduces to is only the assertion that the common man's notion of faultiness is simply the doing of a wrong act expressive of an evil character, there being no question as to the freedom of volition which leads to the act. In other words,

natural ability is the only requisite for moral responsibility for the ordinary man. This being the case, there is nothing in the ordinary idea of blameworthiness which conflicts with the doctrine of necessity. Now the least that can be said is that this is no proof of the compatibility of necessity and moral responsibility,- it is merely the assertion of it. To the person who insists that responsibility implies freedom in willing Edwards can reply only with the contradictory claim.

It should be said, in fairness to Edwards, that the question with which he was dealing is of such a nature that its solution does not lend itself to either deductive or inductive "proof". We must recognize the ultimate character of the problem. We cannot deduce our answer from any other truths, nor can we discover it by empirical investigation. The attitude we take is the fruit neither of logic nor of science,- it is one of those few a priori assumptions which lie at the base of our whole thought structure. It is the answer we get when we take our problems to the oracle of our moral consciousness, an oracle which speaks in the imperative. The truths it dictates we can but feel to be axiomatic. The most we can do in substantiating their truth is to show their implications more satisfactory than those of opposed positions, which, in fact, is what we find being done in all discussions of freedom. But however much this substantiation may strengthen them, it does not account for our fundamental convictions.

Now when we bring to the oracle of the moral conscious-

ness the problem before us, the answer seems clear beyond the possibility of a doubt: moral responsibility implies genuine alternatives; where there is no real choice, we cannot be held accountable. To hold a man blameworthy for doing an act he is unable to avoid, or for failing to will that which he cannot will, is to fly in the face of conscience. The very conception of moral responsibility implies the existence of a power of contrary choice. Kant was right when he insisted that freedom is the essential presupposition of the moral life.

When the relation between man and God is taken into account, the importance of human freedom, in the form of contrary choice, becomes even more apparent. In psychology and in the social sciences its significance is least appreciated, for the scientist excludes all ethical and religious considerations from his study of man. In fact, proceeding as he does with the causal postulate, as formulated by empirical science, his tendency is definitely deterministic. The more he can explain all human activity in terms of the principle of transeunt causation the more successful he is. From the scientific viewpoint there is gain, rather than loss, in abolishing freedom.

When, however, we move up to the level of ethics, freedom becomes the sine qua non of the moral life. It is, as we have seen, the basis of human responsibility. And further, a belief by man in his freedom is a prerequisite of moral effort. This point has been well put by William McDougall, a scientist who appreciates the ethical viewpoint. "If, as

the determinist asserts, each of my actions is completely determined by antecedent conditions and processes that are partly within my own nature, partly in my environment, why should I make any moral effort? This is the legitimate inference from determinism. This is its moral difficulty, which has seldom been squarely faced by its advocates, and never overcome by them."¹²³ To the reply that determinism among Calvinists at least has not borne fruit in the form of moral laxity, it can be answered that the Calvinist in the daily struggle of his moral life forgets the full implications of his belief in predestination. "It must be observed, however, that it is not from their favorite dogma that extreme Calvinists have drawn their ethics. Their moral sense has been invigorated from other sources."¹²⁴ Nevertheless, there are many moralists who, through misunderstanding the meaning of freedom, or through obsession with the desire to give character and motive a place in conduct, espouse the deterministic cause.

It is, as we said, only when we view man in his relation to God that the full implications of determinism emerge. For, on the deterministic view, God becomes the author of sin and of an arbitrary election, and by the sensitive Christian consciousness this cannot but be summarily rejected. Determinism is utterly repugnant to theism. Its damaging implications for God's character cannot be avoided even by

¹²³ William McDougall, *Social Psychology*, p. 202.

¹²⁴ George Park Fisher, *Discussions in History and Theology*, p. 248.

the genius of an Edwards.

The doctrine of necessity is the natural ally of pantheism, naturalism, and agnosticism. It is far more often associated with the doctrine of moral irresponsibility and a non-theistic philosophy than with Christian theism. Significantly enough, several of Edwards' commentators, beginning with Dana, sixteen years after the Enquiry was published, have pointed out the similarity of his theory and the theories of men like Hobbes, Spinoza, Hume, Mill, Kames, etc. But these men realized the incompatibility of determinism and faith in the Christian God in a way that Edwards and other theological determinists, deterred by prejudice, have never done. "It is remarkable", says A.M. Fairbairn, "that while in his ultimate thinking he (i.e., Edwards) had so completely emancipated himself from empiricism, in this field of thought (i.e., his theory of the will) he identified himself with the school to which he was most radically opposed. For just as Collins had so developed Locke as to deny liberty and affirm necessity, and as Hume had resolved causation into mere antecedents and sequents, and as Henry Home had applied the same principles to the naturalistic explanation of morality and religion, so Edwards, in his Treatise on the Will, turned his back upon his own philosophy and advocated one alien not only to Christianity, but even to theism."¹²⁵

¹²⁵ A. M. Fairbairn, *The Prophets of the Christian Faith*, p. 163.

The question may arise as to how, if the dictate of the moral consciousness is against necessity, we can account for the prevalence of determinism. The answer is that other considerations lead to it. Many have been driven to determinism by the feeling that the denial of it is the admission of chance into the universe. They feel the reality of contrary choice, but when they undertake to explain it, they cannot make it intelligible. Others, who are impressed with the part played by character and circumstances in our choices, feel this is impossible if genuine freedom exists, and have accepted determinism for this reason. Still others, seeing the defects in the Arminian theory of the free will, turn to determinism, concluding that there is no other alternative. Among those who are influenced by theological considerations there is the group represented by Edwards and other Calvinists, which feels that the sovereignty of God implies it. Such are the factors which exert an influence in the direction of determinism, but it will be noted that they are considerations which arise from sources other than the moral consciousness. They are allowed to overcome its protest against necessity because of the weight attached to them. Determinism really arises through the exigencies of a certain theological or philosophical system, or from other theories which seem to demand it. It is not found in the unsophisticated mind. The plain man, who considers the nature of freedom by itself, without having to be concerned with its bearing on other views, attributes to himself the power of alternative choice.

The insistence of Edwards and other Calvinists upon retaining the term, freedom, is an undesigned testimony to the fact of genuine choice. Edwards clung to the term although, in his system, it was only the name for a particular form of necessity, and even then had no relation, in his thought, to moral responsibility for volitions. The term is in reality an encumbrance upon the thought of the Enquiry and serves only to becloud the issues. His clinging to it was simply a concession to the reality for which it stood. It was an admission of the force of conscience's demand,- an effort to seem to be granting what his theory in fact denied. Else why should he retain the term? It was only a case of historical justice, when, in the subsequent development of the New England Theology, some of his followers, who taught a freedom that was real, claimed him as an authority for their position.

A further concession by Edwards to the fact that freedom is essential to responsibility is to be seen in his unwillingness to hold a man responsible for non-voluntary dispositions, as Calvinists generally did at his time. To deny a man's responsibility for non-voluntary tendencies is of course not to say that he is responsible only for free volitions. But it is a step in that direction. It is a recognition that there is something about willing which makes responsibility predicable of it alone. And it is a suggestion that that something is what Edwards explicitly denied, namely, the freedom of volitions.

Our conclusion, then, is that he fails to prove that

volitions are, and must be determined, despite his brilliant efforts to do so. And perhaps the least cogent of his arguments is this last one, in which he bases his claim on the demands of our moral nature. For the unmistakable testimony of the moral consciousness is to the reality of genuine freedom.

Before we pass on let us glance at the most significant changes which have taken place in deterministic theories of volition since the time of Edwards, with a view to ascertaining whether determinism can be modified in such a way as to be satisfactory. The "softest" form in which it can be found is that which is usually called self-determinism by its proponents. These thinkers are careful to point out, first of all, that volitions are not determined by external, natural causes. They are rather determined by an inner principle. Further, and this is of cardinal importance in their thinking, our most serious volitions, those for which we feel ourselves responsible, are conditioned by self-consciousness. The motive determining choice does not come to the front simply as the strongest of a number of conflicting desires. It is constituted rather by the agent's self-consciously identifying himself with one desire. In this identification reason may play a part, and the motive may involve a judgment as to the value or rightness of the volition to result from it. Hence the volition may not necessarily be determined by the strongest preference, as Edwards held, a position which is consistent only with hedonism.

We may, it is held by some, come to the point at which

we predominantly identify ourselves with objectively apprehended goods, so that these goods, or ideals, become the real motives of our actions. Self-determinism may thus take a teleological form. Instead of being driven from behind by desires, it is held, we are pulled from before by these rationally apprehended values. And we become free in proportion as our conduct is determined by them. Nevertheless it is our character, as already developed, that determines in the first place whether we identify ourselves with these ideals. Teleological determinism is thus simply ordinary determinism once removed. In the following quotation from Professor A. E. Taylor we have a good description of this theory: "Hence we can at once see that freedom does not mean 'absence of rational connection' or 'absence of determination', but does mean, as so many recent philosophers have told us, for us finite beings, self-determination. I am most free when acting for the realization of a coherent rational purpose, not because my conduct is 'undetermined'; in other words, because there is 'no telling' what I shall do next, but because it is, at such times, most fully determined teleologically by the character of my inner purposes or interests,- in other words, by the constitution of my self." ¹²⁶

In emphasizing the fact of self-consciousness in our choices the self-determinist feels that he has restored the self to its rightful place in volition. There is of course

¹²⁶A. E. Taylor, *The Elements of Metaphysics*, p. 367.

no denial of the fact that the agent's character causes him to identify himself with one desire and not another. It is recognized, however, that this character is not a fixed and unalterable factor, but rather is modified by the agent's conduct, so that he can intelligently influence his future, by his present choices.

This theory avoids many of the criticisms which can be levelled at the more rigidly necessitarian view. It does away with the mechanistic picture of man. It does not regard motives after the analogy of physical forces competing for supremacy, an analogy bristling with fallacies. It is a genuine effort to recognize constructively as well as verbally the existence and activity of the rational self in the willing process. But in what is, from the standpoint of ethics and religion, the most significant feature, it is open to the same objection we have urged against Edwards' theory. Self-determinism, even in its teleological form, leaves no room for genuine choice. As Professor Pringle-Pattison says, "we may agree with Bergson that it is practically indifferent whether we adopt the naturalistic or the teleological alternative, that is to say, whether we regard the course of events as pre-determined by the collocations of brute matter or by some divine Idea."¹²⁷ It cannot be denied that in finalism the agent's volitions are necessitated just as effectually as they are in any other form of

¹²⁷A. S. Pringle-Pattison, *The Idea of God in the Light of Recent Philosophy*, p. 369.

determinism, however mechanistic. It may be true that character and circumstance, according to this theory, do not cause, but only condition volition, but this does not mean that the agent initiates his own acts. They are initiated by the final cause which is taken as his end. It may also be said, as indeed it has been said, for instance by Paulsen, that this is a different sort of causality from that of a physical cause, but whether this is true or not, the necessity is there. Edwards himself pointed out, in dealing with natural and moral necessity, that the necessity in both cases is the same, the difference being only in the terms connected. Real choice is thus, even in teleological determinism, effectively ruled out of court.

And if we deny choice, we in reality deny the self its part in volition. Self-determinism, however "soft" it may become in its teleological form, like other forms of determinism, really leaves the self, the rational I, out of account, substituting in its place simply a causal series. Even though it has been actuated by a desire to restore the self to its rightful place in the willing process, it has not been radical enough in its cure. So long as choice can be analyzed into a series of impersonal events, there is no self in the act.

Edwards' followers have thus not succeeded where he failed. They have indeed made great improvements on him, but they have not been able to reconcile the principle of necessity with genuine choice. And hence determinism and accountability still refuse to be bedfellows.

CHAPTER VII

ORIGINAL SIN

Having made a study of Edwards' doctrine of the divine decrees, and of his theory of volition, it seems logical to take up next his teaching in regard to the origin and propagation of sin. What is man's condition with regard to sin? How did sin originate? And in particular, what is God's part in the origin and spread of it? - these are the questions which lie before us and which Edwards attempts to answer in his treatise, The Great Christian Doctrine of Original Sin Defended.

The treatise was written, he tells us in the preface, as a reply to attacks which had been made against the doctrine. In particular it is a reply to the English divine, Dr. John Taylor of Norwich, whose book, The Scripture-Doctrine of Original Sin Proposed to a Free and Candid Examination, created, at its publication in 1738, a great stir in religious circles. Taylor also dealt with the doctrine of original sin in his Key to the Apostolic Writings, with a Paraphrase and Notes on the Epistle to the Romans. He argued that as a result of Adam's sin men are subject to sorrow, labor, and physical death, but that they are not thereby made guilty of sin nor totally corrupted, and that they have

no "necessary inclination" to sin. In the dispute following the publication of his Free and Candid Examination some New England divines became active, notably Samuel Webster, and Charles Chauncy, who defended Taylor's views, and Peter Clark, and Joseph Bellamy, a staunch follower of Edwards, who opposed Taylor. Edwards devotes a great deal of attention to Taylor in his treatise, but he was aroused not only over the opposition to the doctrine of original sin on the part of men like Taylor, but also over the way in which Watts, Doddridge, and other English Calvinists had attenuated the doctrine in deference to the Arminian attacks.

He begins with a definition of the phrase, original sin, in which he explains that, as commonly used by theologians, it means "the innate sinful depravity of the heart."¹ As popularly understood, he says, it means also the imputation of Adam's first sin, "or in other words the liableness or exposedness of Adam's posterity, in the divine judgment, to partake of the punishment of that sin."² It is in the sense of "corruption of nature", he tells us, that he intends to consider the doctrine at first, allowing the doctrine of our liability to punishment for Adam's sin, i.e., the doctrine of original guilt, to develop later as the connection between the two doctrines emerges.

¹Jonathan Edwards, The Great Christian Doctrine of Original Sin Defended, Works, Vol. II, p. 87. (This work will subsequently be listed as Original Sin.)

²ibid, p. 87.

I. The Proof of Man's Depravity

Edwards begins his development of the doctrine of original sin with a proof that man possesses a depraved nature. There are two lines of reasoning by which he arrives at this conclusion. The first, and by far the most important, is that man's corruption can be inferred from the universality of sin, sin deserving the eternal wrath and curse of God. The other line of proof is drawn from Scriptural facts and statements. To the first of these we now turn.

1. The Proof of Depravity from the Universality of Sin

Part I of the treatise is devoted to this proof. He sums it up in a brief statement before he begins to elaborate it. "I now assert, that mankind are all naturally in such a state, as is attended, without fail, with this consequence or issue; that they universally run themselves into that which is, in effect, their own utter eternal perdition, as being finally accursed of God, and the subjects of His remediless wrath through sin. From which I infer, that the natural state of the mind of man, is attended with a propensity of nature, which is prevalent and effectual to such an issue; and that therefore their nature is corrupt and depraved with a moral depravity, that amounts to and implies their utter undoing."³ He remarks that he wishes to consider first "the truth of the proposition", and then to show the "consequences" he infers from it. The truth of the

³Edwards, Original Sin, Works, Vol. II, p. 93.

proposition that all men expose themselves to "their own utter eternal perdition" can be demonstrated by showing, first, that all men sin, and second, that sin "deserves and exposes to utter and eternal destruction, under God's wrath and curse."⁴ Both of these facts he then proves by quotations from Scripture, after which he undertakes to show that they are also involved in admissions made by Dr. Taylor.

Having shown that all men bring themselves into a condition deserving eternal punishment, Edwards proceeds to deduce the "consequences" of this, that is, the fact of human depravity. This likewise involves the proof of two propositions, namely: "That the mind of man has a natural tendency or propensity to that event, which has been shewn universally and infallibly to take place; and that this is a corrupt or depraved propensity."⁵ The reasoning by which Edwards proves man to be possessed of a propensity for sin is as follows: we observe sin to take place, therefore there must be a sufficient cause for it; since, however, sin is not an isolated event, but a common, universal phenomenon, a steady effect, we must infer from this fact a steady cause, that is to say, a tendency to sin in man. "The natural dictate of reason shews, that where there is an effect, there is a cause, and a cause sufficient for the effect; because, if it were not sufficient, it would not be effectual; and that therefore, where there is a stated prevalence of the effect, there is a stated prevalence in the cause. A steady effect

⁴Edwards, Original Sin, Works, Vol. II, p. 93.

⁵ibid, p.99.

argues a steady cause." ⁶ The fact that men do some good, Edwards argues, does not affect the reasoning, the question here being not how much sin there is a tendency to, but whether there is a sinful tendency. The prevalence of sin is sufficient to prove this, without raising the question at this point of its proportion to the good in man. This tendency, he goes on to say, must not be thought to consist in the external circumstances of man, but is inherent, a propensity with which man is born into the world, as is obvious from the fact that sin takes place in all circumstances. (This should not be taken, of course, as a denial of his position in the Enquiry that our circumstances, in relation to our character, play a part in determining our volitions.)

While it is not explicitly stated here, it is clear from Edwards' language that this propensity is regarded as a determining cause of sin. It is spoken of as sufficient and effectual, which cannot mean anything other than that sin follows from it as a necessary consequence. This is such a fundamental position of his deterministic system that it hardly needs to be pointed out.

Having now proved man possessed of a natural propensity to sin, Edwards moves on to the second proposition he wishes to deduce from the universality of sin and its desert of punishment, namely, that this is a corrupt and depraved propensity. He first argues that the propensity which leads to sin is depraved because sin deserves and incurs God's wrath

⁶ Edwards, Original Sin, Works, Vol. II, p. 100.

and punishment. "Surely that tendency, which, in effect, is an infallible tendency to eternal destruction, is an infinitely dreadful and pernicious tendency."⁷ This is true no matter how many good deeds a man does. The alternatives are "persevering, sinless righteousness" and "the guilt of sin", and it takes only one sin to exclude a man from the ranks of the righteous. "Let never so many thousands, or millions of acts of honesty, good nature, etc. be supposed; yet, by the supposition, there is an unfailing propensity to such moral evil, as in its dreadful consequences infinitely outweighs all effect or consequences of any supposed good."⁸

This effort to prove man's depravity by showing the consequences of the sin to which his natural tendency leads, throws light upon a rather complicated argument Edwards has been following. Instead of reasoning directly from the universality of sin to a depraved propensity for it, he has given an argument of four steps, showing, first, that sin is universal, second, that it deserves eternal destruction, third, that its universality implies a natural tendency to sin, and finally, that this tendency is depraved by virtue of the ill desert of the sin to which it leads. As yet there has been no effort to prove man depraved simply because of his tendency to sin, but only because of the consequences following the sin. However, without giving notice of the change in the line of argument, and possibly without being conscious of it, Edwards now takes up the simpler type

⁷Edwards, Original Sin, Works, Vol. II, p. 107. ⁸ibid, p.107.

of proof based on the nature of sin.

If it should be suggested, he says, that since the number of men's good deeds sometimes exceeds the number of evil, they should therefore not be judged depraved, we have only to remember "the infinite heinousness of sin against God, from the nature of things."⁹ The demerit of sin is so great that the merit of all virtuous acts is as nothing to it. He justifies this statement with the argument that our obligation to God is infinite, thus making any sin infinitely unmeritorious, while at the same time making any good deed less meritorious, owing to the fact that the merit of meeting an obligation is decreased in proportion as the obligation is great. "That on such accounts as these", he concludes, "there is an infinite demerit in all sin against God, which must therefore immensely outweigh all the merit which can be supposed to be in our virtue, I think, is capable of full demonstration."¹⁰ The depravity of man's tendency to sin appears then, not only because of the fact that sin exposes him to "utter ruin", but also because sin is in itself infinitely heinous. This argument in proof of the infinitely heinous character of sin is as old as Anselm. That Edwards felt it strongly is witnessed to by the fact that he emphasized the infinite heinousness of sin in his discourses on Justification by Faith Alone, and The Justice of God in the Damnation of Sinners, and also in his sermon,

⁹ Edwards, Original Sin, Works, Vol. II, p. 108.

¹⁰ *ibid*, p. 108.

God Glorified in Man's Dependence.

His first proof, as he points out, is now complete, but he subjoins a number of sections, giving at some length a cumulative argument exhibiting the sinfulness of man and thus enhancing what has been asserted as to his depravity. It can be proved, he holds, that the degree of evil in man is greater than the good, "not only as to weight and value", but also as to "matter and measure." ¹¹ Edwards had taught that there is no impulse to virtue in the natural man in his sermon, Natural Men in a Dreadful Condition. The great degree of evil in man appears, he says, when we consider our sins of omission. We are commanded to love God with all our hearts, yet many of us withhold more love from Him than we yield, and even the best of us must admit that we fail to love Him as we ought and could. In his Nature of True Virtue he dwells at length upon the fact that man in his natural state is capable only of self-love. Thus considering both our sins of omission and commission, we must recognize that the amount of our sin is far in excess of our righteousness. Further, the corruption of human nature is such that all men sin as soon as they are capable of it, sin continually and sin progressively, growing worse as time passes. Even in the saint there are the remains of sin. Except where the grace of God has intervened, man's folly and stupidity have led him to engage in idolatry and to disregard his own eternal interests. Again, most men in all ages have been

¹¹ Edwards, Original Sin, Works, Vol. II, p. 116.

wicked, and this is true in spite of all that God has done to promote virtue and true religion. "The heart is a mere sink of sin, a fountain of corruption, whence issue all manner of filthy streams."¹² So complete is man's depravity that he is utterly incapable of helping himself. "The hearts of men are dreadfully hard and incorrigible. There is nothing but the mighty power of God will move them. They will cleave to sin, and go on in sin, let what will be done with them."¹³

This completes Edwards' proof of depravity from the universality of sin. Before proceeding to a critical examination of it let us note the fact that man's "total depravity" does not prevent his ever performing a good act. The sinful acts, Edwards does seem to feel, preponderate in numbers, but he never denies the existence of all good acts. In fact the language of his arguments in proof of the prevalence and heinousness of sin implies his consciousness of some good. Take, for instance, this statement: "Thus, whatever acts of virtue and obedience a man performs, yet if he trespass in one point, is guilty of any the least sin, he...is exposed to be wholly cast out of favor with God.." ¹⁴ Again, he comments on Ecclesiastes 7.20: "There is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not", with this remark: "Which is as much as to say, there is no man on

¹² Edwards, Natural Men in a Dreadful Condition, Works, Vol. X, p. 115.

¹³ *ibid*, p. 116.

¹⁴ Edwards, Original Sin, Works, Vol. II, p. 109. (Italics mine)

earth, that is so just, as to have attained to such a degree of righteousness, as not to commit any sin." ¹⁵ In other words, while there are some very just men, that is, men who perform good acts, none are perfect. What Edwards means by depravity, then, is that man's nature is sufficiently corrupt to deserve eternal punishment, to prevent his meriting salvation by anything that he does, and his turning to Christ without the interposition of divine grace,- but not in such a condition as to render him incapable of any good deeds.

Now the arguments which Edwards has advanced unquestionably prove a propensity to sin. The sin of the world cannot be accounted for on any other hypothesis than the existence of a tendency in man toward sinful acts. This is as true for those who believe in free choice as for the determinist. For, as we shall argue, all acts are conditioned at least by man's nature, that is to say, by the tendencies/in his makeup which determine the possible acts before/him. Edwards' argument is an impressive demonstration of the prevalence and strength of those tendencies in us which lead to sin.

Having recognized this amount of truth in his fundamental argument, however, it must be pointed out that his effort to show the corruption of the tendency to sin,- which in reality is a parallel argument to the one proving the existence of the tendency,- will carry little weight

¹⁵ Edwards, Original Sin, Works, Vol. II, p. 115.

with the modern mind. The assertion that the least sin exposes the sinner to eternal punishment pre-supposes such a questionable ^hescatology that it cannot be made the basis of a strong argument. That sin separates us from God is true, but more than this we cannot safely assert. The effort to show the depravity of the tendency to sin by proving the infinite heinousness of each sin is more to the point, but is not convincing. In fact, as D. D. Whedon points out, the argument really admits the principle that necessity excuses, for if guilt is greater when resistance is against a greater motive to good, then it is less when against a lesser motive, and by parity of reasoning, non-existent when there is no motive to good. However, the failure of these rather artificial arguments to make the propensity to sin seem more corrupt by exhibiting sin in an enhanced form, does not weaken his fundamental position, since the mere proof of a tendency to sin is sufficient.

The significant point at which we must take exception from Edwards is his assumption that the tendency to evil is the sole and efficient cause of that evil. There is nothing in the nature of the case to prevent the advocate of contrary choice from taking his start also with the universal sinfulness of mankind and arriving at the conclusion that this sinfulness, while implying a sinful propensity in man, implies it only as the condition, and not as the cause of the sin. Edwards does not attempt to show this line of explanation impossible, even when he is at his favorite sport of answering "evasions". Here then is the weakness of his argu-

ment, that it leaves open an alternative explanation. We need not deny that the deterministic position seems an extremely plausible explanation of the impressive fact that all men sin. The non-determinist, however, claims that his theory is fully capable of accounting for the sinfulness of mankind. He can readily admit a tendency to evil in man giving rise to temptation, and when we recognize that man is free to respond to this temptation, we can see in these two facts ample ground to account for sin. Sin, he claims, is the result of free choices on the part of the person who chooses to respond to the solicitations of the evil, rather than of the good tendencies in his nature.

Not only can the proponent of free choice claim that his view is fully capable of accounting for sin, but that, when the good acts men do are considered along with their sins, it is a more adequate explanation than the deterministic. It is not merely the fact of universal evil that has to be explained, but rather the existence of both evil and good. Now if men's sins imply a tendency to sin, by the same token their good acts, however few, must imply a tendency toward the good. It is not to Edwards' purpose to point this out, since he is concerned here only with establishing the fact of the propensity to sin, but it is germane to his thought. Given then these two conflicting tendencies in man, the question arises as to which shall determine the act in a given situation. Edwards replies that it is the one which, in relation to the situation, is able to produce the experience of the most agreeable. And this is, in most

instances, an intelligible explanation. But there are some times when we exert variant volitions in situations which are, with regard to the volitions, the same. At one time we fail, at another time, in a similar situation, we conquer temptation; and we have the feeling that the reason for the difference is within us, not in our environment,- that in either case we might have done otherwise than we did. Now the determinist cannot adequately account for this: according to him the same individual in the same circumstances must make the same response. Of course it is always left open to him to say that there are no identical situations, and that there is no time when the individual has exactly the same character he had at a previous time. Nor can it be denied that there is force in this reply. But it seems hardly capable of accounting for the widely varying conduct on the part of an individual in similar situations, and even less for his conviction that his right or wrong act is the result of free choice. In such cases the theory that man is able freely to choose between the competing tendencies in his nature seems far more adequate.

2. Scriptural Proofs of Man's Depravity

Included in Part I of Edwards' treatise, along with the argument from the universality of sin, is another proof of man's depravity drawn from the universal mortality of the human race. This is really a Scriptural argument, for it is based on the fact that, according to Scripture, physical death comes upon mankind as a punishment of sin, not as

natural to man. This being true, death, which is the supreme temporal calamity, testifies more strongly than anything else to that disposition which produces sin. Especially is this true when we contemplate the death of infants who have not committed conscious sin. That death should come upon them, reveals how utterly corrupt and ill deserving is that nature we bring into the world with us.

This argument cannot be taken with great seriousness for two reasons. In the first place, it will be very difficult to establish as a definite teaching of Scripture the fact that physical death is due solely to sin. And in the second place, even should we grant this, we have not proved anything more than the universality of sin. The argument thus leaves us where Edwards' other argument left us, without establishing the fact that total depravity, in the Calvinistic sense of a determining propensity, can be inferred from universal sin.

Part III of the treatise is devoted to a proof of human depravity based on our redemption by Christ. The fact, says Edwards, that all Christ came to redeem are sinners ^{of} deserving/punishment, is proof sufficient that men are in a depraved and guilty condition. "The representations of the redemption by Christ, every where in scripture, lead us to suppose, that all whom he came to redeem are sinners; that his salvation, as to the term from which (or the evil to be redeemed from) in all, is sin, and the deserved punishment of sin." ¹⁶ Edwards goes on to say that unless we accept

¹⁶Edwards, Original Sin, Works, Vol. II, p. 310.

the view that man is hopelessly depraved, Christ's redemption is of no avail. For Christ came to redeem us from sin, to give us power over sin. But if man has any power of contrary choice, he has power over sin,- he is free to do the right if he chooses, and therefore Christ's redemption is useless.

This argument is no more successful than the others in proving what Edwards desires to prove, namely, total depravity. Even if man has all the freedom the Pelagian would concede him, Christ's redemption would still be needed to redeem him from the guilt of sins he freely commits. And further, to grant man some power to choose the good is not to imply that he has no need of the help that comes from the cross, even though its influence may not be irresistible. In fact, it might be argued that it is only when a person has some freedom to respond to it that the sufferings and death of Christ can exert a moral influence in his life. To say that the necessity and benefit of Christ's redemption are contingent upon man's being hopelessly depraved is to overshoot the mark by a wide margin.

Edwards develops another argument to prove his point, based on the Scriptural teaching as to the application of redemption. In order to be redeemed, he says, the Scripture teaches us that we must be born again. This idea of the new birth is expressed in various ways. It is sometimes spoken of as repentance and confession, sometimes as circumcision of the heart, sometimes as a spiritual resurrection, i.e., dying unto sin and living unto righteousness, sometimes as

making the heart or spirit new, sometimes as putting off the old man and putting on the new, and sometimes as being created anew or made new creatures. The conclusion Edwards draws from these statements as to what is necessary for a man, if he is to come into the kingdom, is that all men are utterly depraved. "From what is plainly implied in these things, and from what the scripture most clearly teaches of the nature of them, it is certain, that every man is born into the world in a state of moral pollution."¹⁷

None of the Scriptural expressions used here make an explicit statement of what Edwards wants to interpret them as meaning. They are all figurative representations of the sinfulness and corruption of man. But they do not indicate certainly that he brings into the world with him a nature so utterly corrupt as to render it impossible for him ever to choose the right or accept the gospel. They indicate simply that all men have sinned, and thus need the new birth, but they leave it open for the non-determinist to hold, if he chooses, that they sinned freely.

II. Original Righteousness and the Fall

1. Edwards' Presentation of these Doctrines

In Part II of his treatise Edwards presents the doctrine of original righteousness. This doctrine is important to the theory of original sin, since it is a means of reconciling God's holy nature with the idea of inherited depravity.

¹⁷ Edwards, Original Sin, Works, Vol. II, p. 325.

The substance of the view is "that our first parents were created in a state of moral rectitude and holiness." ¹⁸ After expounding this doctrine ^{Edwards} undertakes to erect the bridge between man as righteous and as depraved by the theories of Adam's federal headship and the fall. Except for his insistence that Adam's will was completely determined, there is nothing original in Edwards' presentation and defense of the doctrine of man's pristine righteousness. For this reason and because Edwards himself treats it in very brief compass, we shall not give an extended statement of it.

The first three chapters of Genesis, he says, teach that man was created righteous by God. And since Adam's eating the forbidden fruit was his first sin, he must have been righteous up to the time of its commission. "This history leads us to suppose, that Adam's sin, with relation to the forbidden fruit, was the first sin he committed. Which could not have been, had he not always, till then, been perfectly righteous, righteous from the first moment of his existence; and consequently, created or brought into existence righteous." ¹⁹ That he was created righteous, follows from the fact that he was created a moral agent. In a moral agent there is no medium between righteousness and sin. To say that he was innocent, would thus be to say that he was righteous. Innocency is distinct from righteous-

¹⁸ Edwards, Original Sin, Works, Vol. II, p. 198.

¹⁹ *ibid*, p. 198.

ness only when it is the innocence of a non-moral agent. As a moral agent, created righteous, Adam was "obliged as soon as he existed to act aright", and this being the case he was "inclined to act aright."²⁰ The real meaning of his being created righteous is that he was created with an inclination to the right, or a "holy disposition of heart." But for this he would never have acted righteously during the period before his first sin.

Adam's righteousness previous to the eating of the forbidden fruit is proved not only by the fact that Genesis represents this as the first sin, but also by the Genesis account of the "great favors and smiles of heaven" enjoyed by our first parents in Eden. These things were the rewards of righteousness, and the curse after the fall was the punishment of sin. If there had been no righteousness, God would obviously have withheld His great favors.

A further argument for original righteousness is found by Edwards in Ecclesiastes 7.29: "Lo, this only have I found, that God made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions." He dwells on this text at unusual length, insisting that it undoubtedly refers to the righteousness of our first parents.

Edwards defends his position against his Arminian enemy, Dr. Taylor, who held that the right disposition came as a result of right action, by pointing out that no right act can take place without a right disposition or principle

²⁰Edwards, Original Sin, Works, Vol. II, p. 198.

as its source,- a defense which is undoubtedly justified on either deterministic or non-deterministic grounds. Edwards rightly says: "The very supposition of a disposition to right action being first obtained by repeated right action, is grossly inconsistent with itself: For it supposes a course of right action, before there is a disposition to perform any right action."²¹ The Arminian position that moral acts took place before any sort of moral tendencies were developed is wholly untenable.

In Part IV of his treatise Edwards answers objections to the doctrine of original sin; and in reply to the criticism that it makes God the author of sin, gives a further explanation of the conception of original righteousness, and undertakes to account for the fall. With regard to the conception of original righteousness he takes the position that man's inclination to the right sprang from, or consisted in supernatural principles of holiness implanted in him, which held in check his inferior natural impulses. In this respect he departs from Calvin's view that Adam's primitive gifts were natural. To let him express his idea in his own words: "When God made man at first, he implanted in him two kinds of principles. There was an inferior kind, which may be called NATURAL, being the principles of mere human nature; such as self-love, with those natural appetites and passions, which belong to the nature of man, in which his love to his own liberty, honour, and pleasure were

²¹ Edwards, Original Sin, Works, Vol. II, p. 199.

exercised....Besides these, there were superior principles, that were spiritual, holy, and divine, summarily comprehended in divine love; wherein consisted the spiritual image of God, and man's righteousness and true holiness; which are called in scripture the divine nature. These principles may, in some sense, be called SUPERNATURAL."²² In a note on his use of the term, supernatural, he explains that he does not mean a principle miraculously introduced, but a nature distinct from, and above what belongs to man's nature "merely as man",- that which makes man not only a man but a "virtuous, holy, and spiritual" man. The supernatural principles are thus not essential to human nature, but to the spiritual well being of man. They are, he continues, "such as immediately depend on man's union and communion with God, or divine communications and influences of God's Spirit."²³ In fact he frequently speaks of the blessings of Adam's unfallen state as consisting in the presence of the Holy Spirit within him. When Adam fell, "the Holy Spirit, that divine inhabitant, forsook the house."²⁴ In the state of original righteousness the superior principles dominated the natural principles completely, causing man inwardly and outwardly to be righteous.

It should be noted, however, that man was not without natural impulses to sin, even in the state of original righteousness; the impulses are there all along but they

²²Edwards, Original Sin, Works, Vol. II, pp 332-335.

²³ibid, pp 335-336.

²⁴ibid, p. 336.

are only checked. Just as depraved man is capable of good acts and presumably, therefore, possessed of some tendency to the good, so man in the state of original righteousness cannot be said to have been totally righteous in the sense that all parts of his nature were holy. There were, Edwards teaches, from the beginning impulses natural to man which tended to sin, and which could not, therefore, have been designated as a "holy disposition". However, when he is answering "evasions", he denies strenuously that Adam's first sin implied a previous propensity to sin, arguing that a tendency is proved, not by one, but by repeated acts. In his essay, Concerning the Perseverance of Saints, he says that the Spirit dwelt in Adam "constantly, and without interruption, in such a degree as to hold him above any lust or sinful habit or principle."²⁵ He does go so far at one point as to recognize that an evil disposition or inclination "was included" in Adam's first sin, but, he says, it "was not properly distinct from his first act of sin."²⁶ Thus this is no recognition that a previous sinful propensity was necessary to account for temptation and the consequent sin. That Edwards could take the position he did on this matter can be credited only to the fact that he did not fully realize the meaning of what he had said as to the existence of an "inferior nature" in Adam. This, however, is only one of the inconsistencies into which he falls in

²⁵ Edwards, Concerning the Perseverance of Saints, Works, Vol. VIII, p. 437.

²⁶ Edwards, Original Sin, Works, Vol. II, p. 343.

dealing with the problem of sin.

We have seen in our study of Edwards' theory of freedom that Adam "possessed all the freedom it is in the mind of man to conceive." In this respect his doctrine of original righteousness was unique. Augustine, Calvin, and the Westminster Confession attributed to Adam in the state of original righteousness a genuine power of contrary choice. In denying this Edwards shows himself more consistent, for moral perfection implies determinism. To be perfect there must be no evil tendencies which present an evil alternative to man. At least these tendencies, if they exist at all, must be in such subjection to the higher tendencies that they can condition no genuine alternative. In allowing Adam the freedom to sin Calvin and others were thereby in reality contradicting their attribution of perfect righteousness to him.

We are now ready to examine Edwards' account of the fall. Strange to say, there is no word of explanation as to why the fall took place in the work on original sin. For this we have to go to his essay, Concerning the Perseverance of Saints, where he compares Adam and the converted man under the New Covenant. There he assigns the fall to "man's own weakness and instability."²⁷ Adam, he tells us, was left to his own strength to persevere in righteousness. "The great thing wherein the first covenant was deficient, was,

²⁷ Edwards, Concerning the Perseverance of Saints, Works, Vol. VIII, p. 436.

that the fulfilment of the righteousness of the covenant, and man's perseverance, was entrusted with man himself, with nothing better to secure it than his own strength." ²⁸ Although he possessed divine grace,- the supernatural principles,- it was left to him to make use of that grace. "Eternal life was not merely suspended on that grace that was given him and dwelt in him, but on his improvement of that grace which he already had." ²⁹ Grace dwelt in Adam as a "constant principle", but he was promised no "extraordinary, occasional assistance" of grace, as is necessary for fallen man if he is to persevere. Being left to himself and without this "extraordinary assistance", Adam fell into sin. Once the fall had taken place, man's corruption followed. "When man sinned and broke God's covenant, and fell under his curse, these superior principles left his heart: For indeed God then left him; that communion with God on which these principles depended, entirely ceased; the Holy Spirit, that divine inhabitant, forsook the house." ³⁰ That God should withdraw after man became a rebel was only fitting and proper, indeed inevitable for a holy God. But once this took place, man's total corruption followed naturally. The inferior natural principles of his nature, being freed from restraint, took complete possession of him and sought their own sinful objects.

Thus we see the manner in which the decree of sin is

²⁸ Edwards, Concerning the Perseverance of Saints, Works, Vol. VIII, p. 436.

²⁹ *ibid*, p. 437.

³⁰ Edwards, Original Sin, Works, Vol. II, p. 336.

effectuated. Man's corruption came about without God's doing anything positive to cause man to sin. "Thus it is easy to give an account, how total corruption of heart should follow on man's eating the forbidden fruit, though that was but one act of sin, without God putting any evil into his heart, or implanting any bad principle, or infusing any corrupt taint, and so becoming the author of depravity."³¹ Since God does nothing positive in causing sin, He cannot be accused of producing or committing sin. This is of prime importance to Edwards. He refers us here to the sections at the end of the Enquiry in which he emphasizes at length this distinction between God's actually producing sin and His permitting it by withdrawing His restraining influence.

We are reminded again, however, that God's permitting a thing does not imply that He does not decree it. It is much better, he argues, for the divine wisdom to determine the existence of sin than for it to be "disposed by blind and undesigning causes."³² We have already discussed Edwards' attempt to justify the permission of sin in connection with our study of the decrees, and also his attempt to explain how it is possible for sin to get into the world against the will of a sovereign God, by means of the theory of the secret and revealed will of God. There is, therefore, no necessity here for going again into these matters. The question which emerges is the distinction between the

³¹ Edwards, Original Sin, Works, Vol. II, p. 337.

³² Edwards, Enquiry, Works, Vol. I, p. 384.

permission and the production of sin.

Before criticizing Edwards' account of the fall and how it took place, however, let us note that the corruption of Adam does not flow solely from the first sin as its efficient cause. The first sin, according to Edwards' teaching, is in reality only the occasion of the corruption which followed. The corruption really came from the withdrawal of God's Spirit and the consequent liberation of man's natural impulses to sin. It cannot, therefore, be said that Edwards regards one sin as having entirely dislocated man's moral nature. This, as F. R. Tennant points out, would be impossible, and is a cardinal objection to any theory which ascribes the consequent corruption of man wholly to his first sin. Edwards' theory avoids also another criticism which is often made against the doctrine of the fall as responsible for the inherited corruption of the race. It is argued that the transmission of the results of the fall is inexplicable, since no defect of nature in Adam acquired through one act could be transmitted to posterity. On Edwards' view, however, the transmission of this corruption is simply the transmission of natural impulses, a transmission due, as he says, to "a course of nature", not of an acquired defect. Again, he does not have to go the length of Calvin and others who said that the first sin caused the loss of the power of contrary choice, seeing he had denied it to Adam even before the fall.

Edwards believed in a pre-mundane fall of the angels. In some remarks on this subject he explains their fall in

the same way he explains Adam's,- the lower principles in their natures overcame the higher. The occasion of the fall was God's decree to unite human nature to His Son, a decree which aroused opposition among the angels, in view of the fact that they would have to minister to a creature of inferior nature. They therefore decided to resist God and become independent of His government. "And having an appetite to their own honor, it overcame holy dispositions, which, when once overcome, immediately left them to the full and unrestrained rage of the principles that overcame."³³ How the holy angels came to possess these lower principles, and how they fell from a state of perfect righteousness, Edwards does not explain any more than he does the same difficulties in the case of Adam. It is significant that no connection between the fall of the angels and the fall of Adam is asserted. The two events are perfectly unrelated,- Adam was neither weaker nor stronger as a result of the fall in heaven.

2. Observations on Edwards' Doctrine of Original Righteousness and the Fall

The conception of a state of original righteousness in which primitive man was born has almost disappeared from modern theology. There are insuperable difficulties in connection with it. We shall now briefly point out the major objections to which Edwards' presentation of it is liable.

To begin with, modern scholarship recognizes that there

³³Jonathan Edwards, *Fall of the Angels*, Works, Vol. X, p. 11.

is inadequate Biblical support for the doctrine. No mention is made, in the first three chapters of Genesis, of a state of complete moral perfection. Edwards' inference, from the fact that there was a first sin, that Adam was a paragon of holiness before this sin, is out of the question. Adam is represented as having been created a moral being, and innocent, but there is not the slightest justification for Edwards' position that, since there is no medium in a moral being between sin and righteousness, the innocence of Adam was tantamount to moral perfection. All our knowledge of moral development contradicts this assumption. Again, Edwards' argument, that the favors enjoyed by Adam and Eve before the fall implied their perfect righteousness, is based on the untenable assumption that a man's earthly estate always corresponds to his desert. Thus even if we regard the Genesis account as substantially literal history, we cannot justify a doctrine of original righteousness. But that the first chapters of Genesis are not to be taken as literal history is a position which is generally accepted. As for the assertion in Ecclesiastes 7.29 that God created man upright, this means, if we take it at face value, only that God created man without sin, not that He made him a creature of consummate moral perfection. We have already seen that Paul knew nothing of original righteousness, and we are quite safe in making the general assertion that it is not a Scriptural doctrine. There is a vast difference between the innocence of "the first Adam" in his unfallen state and the perfection of "the second Adam".

A second objection to the doctrine of original righteousness is that it conflicts with the most fundamental and well established findings of evolutionary science. We must adjust our notions of man's primitive state to fit the scientific conception of a gradual progress of the race, according to which the first man may be regarded as created innocent, but not as a moral and spiritual ideal.

The impossibility of the doctrine becomes most obvious when we think of it together with the fall. There is no possible way of accounting for the fact that a being in the state of original righteousness should fall into sin. Edwards makes it clear, as we have seen, that God did not withdraw from man until after man had sinned. This fact is of the utmost significance, for it means that man is represented as sinning at the very time that he possessed the Holy Spirit, and that all his acts were determined by a dominant, holy disposition. That this would be impossible need not be argued. The commission of a sin means that this holy disposition did not determine the act. For some reason it ceased to be dominant, and yet, according to Edwards, the only possible explanation of this cessation is the disposition itself. But since we cannot regard the disposition as being responsible for its own overthrow, we are at a complete loss on his principles to account for the first sin. If we regard it as due to external circumstances, we still could not avoid the difficulty. For the force of the external circumstances would depend on an internal propensity to evil to which appeal is made. And if this propensity is strong

enough to determine man's acts in some circumstances, man can hardly be said to be a righteous person dominated by a supernatural principle of righteousness. Adam would have been righteous only in certain circumstances. But this is absolutely denied by the doctrine of original righteousness.

Edwards' explanation that Adam, being left to his own strength, sinned because of his own weakness, beclouds rather than clarifies the situation. To say that Adam was left to his own strength to improve grace is to use words which have significant meaning only in the mouth of the indeterminist. It is to assert that Adam was free to choose whether his higher nature would govern his acts. But the picture Edwards has given us of Adam before the fall is of a man whose will in its every act was determined by this regnant higher nature, and therefore incapable of choosing whether this nature would determine it. The only thing he could mean by Adam's being left to his own strength, is that his acts were determined by him without outside interference. This, however, is simply to say that his acts were motivated by his own holy disposition. But this is a contradiction of the major thesis that Adam was created with a dominant, perfectly holy nature. We are therefore left in the dark as to how the first sin took place.

That Edwards can deny that Adam's sin proved a propensity to evil in him only shows how little he grasped the implications of his assertion that a man dominated by a holy principle fell into sin. For whether we take the determinis-

tic or indeterministic position, we must recognize the impossibility of sin's arising without a tendency to it. As F. R. Tennant says, "Whether the freedom ascribed to the will of unfallen Adam were that of perfect harmony with the will of God, or that of independence of all motives, or that of choice conditioned by motive and character, it is equally hard on the theory of an original balance or pre-established harmony of human nature to explain how sin could take its rise. It is the approach to evil, the indwelling propulsion to a wrong course which, on the theory that man was made at once an innocent and a moral being, precisely needs to be accounted for." ³⁴ Edwards can be condemned out of his own mouth. He argues that there could have been no righteous act without a righteous disposition. It will follow that there could be no evil act without an evil disposition. Further, according to his theory of the will, no act takes place without a motive; the first sin, therefore, must have had a motive arising from Adam's nature in relation to its circumstances, and this motive was certainly not a good motive. Edwards can account for Adam's sin, therefore, only by admitting a tendency in him strong enough in certain circumstances to overcome the holy principle and lead to sin. Even if we regard the first man as free, as Calvin did, we can account for his sin only if we postulate a propensity to it which gives rise to temptation. In neither case, of course, would Adam have been quite the impeccable and fault-

³⁴ F. R. Tennant, *The Origin and Propagation of Sin*, p. 28.

less creature pictured by the doctrine of original righteousness, but this only goes to show that a doctrine of original righteousness in a high form is utterly impossible. Edwards would have had a more satisfactory position had he freely recognized the "inferior nature" as a tendency to sin, strong enough in certain circumstances to gain the control of Adam's action.

We come now to examine Edwards' demonstration of how God can decree sin without becoming the author of it. Leslie Stephen remarks that with this problem "Edwards struggles long and with less than his usual vigor."³⁵ This is a true statement, although Edwards' son cites his father's solution of the problem of God's part in the origin of sin as one of his outstanding "improvements" in theology.³⁶ The weakest part of Edwards' deterministic system appears in his dealing with sin. This may be because the problem of sin is perhaps the greatest of the difficulties to which his position forces him. But at any rate, his effort to show how God permits sin without producing it is as weak as his account of how the first sin originated in a perfect man. Of course this failure to give an adequate account of why the first sin occurred is itself a failure to show how God permitted sin's entrance into the world. But if we waive this objection, there is still the fact that the term 'permit' seems utterly

³⁵Leslie Stephen, *Hours in a Library*, Vol. I, p. 319.

³⁶Jonathan Edwards, (the Younger), *Improvements in Theology, Made by President Edwards, and Those Who Have Followed His Course of Thought*, in *Works*, Ed. by S. E. Dwight, Vol. I, pp 616-618.

out of place in his account of God's relation to sin.

Even if we accept the fact that God's withdrawal from man is itself not a positive act producing sin, it is the occasion upon which other causes produce sin, and these are positive, direct acts of God. As W. A. Copinger says, referring to the doctrine of a permissive decree, "It still leaves God as the author of sin, for he who enacts a law which it is impossible to perform without grace and withholds that grace from him upon whom the law is imposed, is in reality the cause of sin, or rather the cause that the law is not observed: which non-observance cannot then be accounted as sin."³⁷ God's creation of man with an inferior nature tending to sin, and his placing of him in circumstances giving rise, along with this nature, to a temptation which constitutes a motive causing sin by a complete necessity,- these are the acts which produce sin. And the fact that God's withdrawal of His Spirit is not itself the efficient cause of sin serves only to point out the fact that these other acts of His are. God, therefore, does not permit sin in any sense of that term, even though one necessary act in the chain of causes leading to it is, with regard to the sin,- though not in itself,- a negative act. As a matter of fact, this act should never be thought of in isolation from the other factors leading to sin. It is not the whole of what God, according to Edwards, does to cause sin. His withdrawal must be regarded simply as one step in

³⁷W. A. Copinger, Treatise on Predestination, Election and Grace, p. 160.

a chain of causes which make sin inevitable. To speak of it by itself as having a positive or negative relationship to sin becomes irrelevant. The significant fact is that God determines sin, and the withdrawal of His Spirit is one means by which He does so. Edwards himself takes this point of view when he wishes to remind us that God is the "disposer" of sin, shifting to the other position only when attempting to avoid the implications of this for God's character. That he must resort to such methods reveals the impossibility of reconciling the permitting~~ing~~ and the disposing of sin. A.V.G. Allen has well described Edwards' failure to deal adequately with the question: "At this point in his theology, upon which everything hinges, he takes refuge in darkness, not in light. What he needed, what he was sincerely striving after, was some formula which, while expressing the relationship of human sinfulness to the order and nature of things, should not ~~not~~ impute to God complicity with or responsibility for its origin. But this he could not do so long as he denied the self-determining power of the human will."³⁸ Thus the distinction between the efficient and the permissive decrees of God turns out to be a distinction without a difference.

III. The Federal Headship of Adam

1. Edwards' Exposition and Proof of the Doctrine

The next part of the doctrine of original sin is the federal headship of Adam. Edwards has attempted to show that

³⁸A.V.G.Allen, Life and Works of Jonathan Edwards, p. 87.

all men inherit a corrupt nature. He has undertaken also to prove that the first man began in a state of moral and spiritual perfection. The task now is to show that man's depravity, and his consequent guilt, is due to the fall of Adam, owing to his connection with Adam as federal head of the race. We shall not present the exposition of Edwards' doctrine of Adam's headship, and of the imputation of his sin and guilt to posterity, separate from his proofs of his position. The presentation and defense of the doctrine will emerge together as we follow him in his Scriptural exegesis and philosophical discussion.

He begins with an exposition of the first three chapters of Genesis, in which he purports, as in the case of original righteousness, to find a Scriptural basis for his doctrine. The threat to Adam and Eve, he says, in the event of their sinning, was a threat of death. This death was the opposite to the life Adam was enjoying in Eden, and as such involved not merely death of the body, but sin, misery, and guiltiness in the sight of God. "Now that which is most opposite to that life and state in which Adam was created, is a state of total, confirmed wickedness, and perfect hopeless misery, under the divine displeasure and curse; not excluding temporal death, or the destruction of the body, as an introduction to it."³⁹ It was the opposite also of that eternal life promised Adam as a reward for his obedience, and thus was an endless death,- "an exposure to everlasting

³⁹ Edwards, Original Sin, Works, Vol. II, p. 206.

wickedness and misery, in separation from God, and in enduring His wrath." ⁴⁰ In support of this statement Edwards brings forward texts from both Old and New Testaments.

The threat to Adam, found in Genesis 2.17, was as follows: "...but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." Now this threat, while in the second person singular, and making no express mention of his/posterity, nevertheless must have included them. God frequently spoke in the second person singular to the heads of the race, such as Abraham, when their posterity were also intended. Other remarks addressed to Adam in the second person singular obviously, in the light of subsequent history, included his descendants. For instance, the words, "Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it" ⁴¹ and the words "Behold, I have given you every herb yielding seed;.....and every tree, in which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed...." ⁴² certainly included both Adam and his descendants. Further, the sentence passed upon Adam in Genesis 3.19, "unto dust shalt thou return", without doubt referred to his posterity. These facts make it legitimate to infer that they were included also in the threat of death. Indeed, Edwards adds, since the sentence came in pursuance of the threat, and in punishment/upon posterity as well as upon Adam, it is more than certain that

⁴⁰ Edwards, Original Sin, Works, Vol. II, p. 207.

⁴¹ Genesis 1. 28.

⁴² Genesis 1. 29.

the former were included in the threat. A further evidence that posterity was included in the threat of eternal death is found in the fact that God's curse on the ground affected Adam's children equally with himself, and yet the second person singular is again used in pronouncing the curse. The sentence would not have fallen upon Adam's posterity along with him unless they had been included in the threat executed by the sentence.

Again, there is evidence in the fact that Adam named his wife Eve, or Life, on that occasion, and because of God's promise that her seed should bruise the serpent's head. This promise is literally, for Edwards, the protevangelium. Through her descendants, the Redeemer, Eve is to become the mother of all the living, that is, of all who should be saved by Christ. But the very fact that Adam gave her this name with this understanding shows that he understood the salvation to be salvation from the ruin brought upon his posterity by the serpent, in tempting Eve and him to sin. The salvation wrought by Christ was to be a thwarting of the serpent's design. But this implies Adam's realization that his posterity was included in the death threatened in case he should fall.

If we consider all the foregoing evidence, concludes Edwards, "I cannot but think, it must appear to every impartial person, that Moses's account does, with sufficient evidence, lead all mankind, to whom his account is communicated, to understand, that God, in his constitution with Adam, dealt with him as a public person,- as the head of the human

species,- and had respect to his posterity, as included in him." ⁴³

Edwards follows his section on the federal headship of Adam with a long list of proof-texts, showing from both Old and New Testaments that sin belongs to man as a property of the species, and that it belongs to him from birth. This not only strengthens his position as to man's depravity, but also shows the oneness of the race in sin, and thus supports his argument for the federal headship. The passage, Romans 5. 12-21, is exegeted at great length as a further proof that Adam was the federal head of the race, and that both his depravity and his guilt are imputed to us.

Up to this point Edwards has contented himself with proving that Adam's posterity were included with him in the threat of eternal death attached to his first sin. In Part IV of his treatise, where he has a section elaborating his conception of our relation to Adam, he goes on to show that posterity's inclusion in the threat was due to their literal oneness with Adam in the first sin and in the guilt arising therefrom. "God, in every step of his proceeding with Adam, in relation to the covenant or constitution established with him, looked on his posterity as being one with him." ⁴⁴ To be sure, God dealt more immediately with Adam, but it was as head of the whole body, as root of the tree. "And in his proceedings with him, he dealt with all the branches, as if they had been then existing in their root." ⁴⁵ And then he

⁴³Edwards, Original Sin, Works, Vol. II, p. 228.

⁴⁴ibid, p. 342.

⁴⁵ibid, p. 342.

adds, "From which it will follow, that both guilt, or exposedness to punishment, and also depravity of heart, came upon Adam's posterity just as they came upon him, as much as if he and they had all co-existed, like a tree with many branches."⁴⁶ That is to say, our guilt and native depravity are identical with Adam's guilt and depravity in his first sin. The guilt with which we are born is Adam's guilt in his first sin. "The guilt a man has upon his soul at first existence, is one and simple, viz. the guilt of the original apostacy, the guilt of the sin by which the species first rebelled against God. This, and the guilt arising from the depraved disposition of the heart, are not to be looked upon as two things, distinctly imputed and charged upon men in the sight of God."⁴⁷ Likewise the depravity with which we are born is Adam's depravity in his first sin. "The first existing of a corrupt disposition, is not to be looked upon as sin distinct from their participation of Adam's first sin."⁴⁸ Our depravity is not, therefore, to be thought of as due to the imputation of Adam's guilt to us, but to be due solely to our identity with Adam. "The first being of an evil disposition in a child of Adam...is not to be looked upon as a consequence of the imputation of that first sin...Indeed the derivation of the evil disposition to Adam's posterity..is a consequence of the union that the wise Author of the world has established between Adam and his posterity; but not proper-

⁴⁶ Edwards, Original Sin, Works, Vol. II, p. 342.

⁴⁷ *ibid*, p. 343.

⁴⁸ *ibid*, p. 343.

ly a consequence of the imputation of his sin." ⁴⁹ Morally and spiritually we are Adam,- the first sin is our sin, and the guilt arising from it, our guilt. We share not only in the moral culpability (culpa), but also in the liability to punishment (reatus).

This oneness with Adam in his first sin and guilt is the ground upon which God could include us in the threat of punishment appended to the commission of the sin. We are punishable not because Adam's sin and guilt are imputed to us but because we committed the sin and incurred the guilt. The punishment, as we have seen, consists in eternal depravity, with its attendant guilt, exposing us to the eternal wrath of God. It is a continuing depravity and guilt, meted out as punishment alike to Adam and to his posterity, and is to be distinguished in both of them from the depravity and guilt of the first sin, of which it is the punishment and the consequence. The first depravity with its guilt differs from the depravity and the guilt which follows it as a punishment in that it remains in us, as it did in Adam, as "an established principle". It comes upon us, Edwards says, as it did upon Adam, by a permissive decree of God. God simply withdraws His presence from us as He did from him, leaving the natural principles in us to gain the mastery.

On the vexed question of mediate and immediate imputation, Edwards, in so far as he can be called an imputationist at all, takes the former view. Samuel Miller, indeed,

⁴⁹ Edwards, Original Sin, Works, Vol. II, p. 344.

spoke of him as immediate imputationist, but Professor Charles Hodge and George Nye Boardman were correct in taking the contradictory position. Since Adam's first sin was likewise our sin, there was no possibility of imputing his guilt to us before our becoming depraved. We are guilty because we are depraved, not depraved because we were first guilty. Edwards tells us plainly that, just as Adam's own sin preceded his guilt, so our depravity is antecedent to our guilt. "The first depravity of heart, and the imputation of that (Adam's) sin, are both the consequences of that established union (i.e., between Adam and us); but yet in such order, that the evil disposition is first, and the charge of guilt consequent, as it was in the case of Adam himself." ⁵⁰

In this theory of our identity with Adam Edwards is returning to the Augustinian idea of the real oneness of the race with Adam. He appears to have been more immediately indebted to Jean Frederic Stapfer, of Zurich. In a note, he quotes extensively from Stapfer's Theologia Polemica, which had been published about fourteen years before his own treatise. The following excerpt from the quotation reveals the fact that Stapfer had stated the view Edwards expounds almost in the latter's own words. "'Seeing therefore that Adam with all his posterity constitute but one moral person, and are united in the same covenant, and are transgressors of the same law, they are also to be looked upon as having, in a moral estimation, committed the same transgression of

⁵⁰ Edwards, Original Sin, Works, Vol. II, p. 344.

the law, both in number and in kind." ⁵¹ The view that Adam and the race are one, with respect to the first sin, not merely one "in nature", or one in a rather vague generic sense, but "one moral person", as Edwards, following Stapfer, holds, carries the Augustinian conception to its most extreme development.

The doctrine of imputation as consisting in our literal identity with Adam in his first sin and its consequence raises an interesting question. Is this idea of imputation consistent with the meaning the term carried in the federal theology? Imputation, as the term is there used, signifies the application to one individual of the moral act and desert of another. It means that Adam's first sin and its guilt were attributed to his posterity, not because he was literally one moral person with them, but because he was their representative. As a representative he was a distinct individual,- he acted for the race,- but his sinful act was not identical with the race's sinful act. However, in Edwards' view Adam's first sin and guilt are not to be treated as if they were the race's,- they actually were the race's. "He asserted not only that all men sinned in Adam, but that every man is identical with Adam, and has therefore actually committed Adam's sin." ⁵² Imputation as a consequence of the oneness of Adam and the race thus means nothing more than the imputation of the race's sin to itself. As

⁵¹ Jean Frederic Stapfer, *Theologia Polemica*, quoted by Edwards, *Original Sin*, Works, Vol. II, p. 345.

⁵² A.V.G.Allen, *Life and Writings of Jonathan Edwards*, p. 308.

Edwards puts it in one place: "And therefore the sin of the apostasy is not theirs, merely because God imputes it to them; but it is truly and properly theirs, and on that ground God imputes it to them."⁵³ It would be as true according to him to say that the race's sin is imputed to Adam as to say that Adam's sin is imputed to the race. As a matter of fact, Edwards, though he retains the term, in reality gives up the doctrine of imputation as it existed in the federal theology. He denies the fact that the sin and guilt of a federal representative, - an individual distinct from the race, - is attributed to the race. As Alexander V. G. Allen says, "The old federal conception grows weak, which regarded Adam as having a proprietorship in the race of his descendants. Instead of being the head of humanity he becomes rather its generic type on that side of its existence which is of the earth earthy."⁵⁴ Edwards has really abandoned the federal theology in his attempt to explain and defend it. He reveals himself as fundamentally at odds with the legal fictions bound up in the theory. He is too true at this point to moral experience to feel justified in charging either the sin or the guilt of one individual upon another, no matter how nice a theory of federalship is developed. In beginning his discussion of the race's relation to Adam with a presentation of the federal theory he is in fact, though he does not realize it, using a conception

⁵³ Edwards, Original Sin, Works, Vol. II, p. 360.

⁵⁴ A.V.G. Allen, Life and Writings of Jonathan Edwards, p. 311.

which does~~n~~ot go nearly far enough for him, and which he moves on in reality, though not in word, to repudiate as foreign to his thought and as morally untenable. Here again he is influenced by his desire to do strict justice to the demands of the moral consciousness.

The theory of our literal identity with Adam in his first sin is a further development of the position taken in the Enquiry that we are responsible only for volitions~~and~~ their consequences. It reveals how, on this view, we can be held responsible, as Edwards insists we are, for our inherited character. Our depraved nature is our responsibility because it results from our own volition. We inherit it, but nevertheless our own sinful act was the cause of it. It reveals also how one person can be held responsible for another's sin,- the problem is solved and the ethical difficulty overcome by the simple expedient of identifying what appear two distinct acts. We are guilty for Adam's transgression because we committed it. Thus Edwards opened the way for that distinguishing doctrine of the New England Theology that all sin is voluntary.

In endeavoring to meet the obvious objection that his theory of the identity of Adam and his posterity in the first sin violates the fact of individuality, Edwards offers a highly ingenious argument. Most emphatically a creationist, he has no need of the traducian hypothesis of the evolution of souls to support his theory. Briefly stated, his argument is that, since identity in created things rests on a divine constitution, God has a perfect right to identify

Adam and his posterity if He chooses. The objection to the oneness of Adam and his posterity, he says, derives all its plausibility from the failure to recognize that there is nothing in the nature of the things we identify, taken in themselves alone, to account for the identification. Some things which are entirely distinct, and quite diverse, are yet so united by God that they are in a sense one. A tree, for instance, one hundred years old is the same plant from which it grew. The body of a man at forty is one with the infant body which first came into the world. Likewise personal identity is a thing which is arbitrary, that is to say, due solely to God's sovereign will in the matter. To say that the identity of the same consciousness through time is due to the nature of the soul is simply another way of saying that it is due to God, since God gave the soul its nature. "From these things it will clearly follow, that identity of consciousness depends wholly on a law of nature; and so, on the sovereign will and agency of GOD."⁵⁵

We can even carry this principle farther and show that the identity of all created substance is dependent upon the divine constitution. This follows from the fact of the continued preservation in being of all created substance by God. We know this continued upholding activity of God to be a fact because the present existence of all created substance is a dependent existence. A dependent existence is an effect, and must therefore have a cause. The cause must be one of

⁵⁵Edwards, Original Sin, Works, Vol. II, p. 351.

two things: either the antecedent existence of the same substance, or the power of God. But it cannot be the antecedent existence of the same substance for two reasons; first, because the antecedent created existence is "no active cause, but wholly a passive thing",⁵⁶ and second, because no cause can produce effects in a time and place where it is not,- and no created thing is at one moment in the same time and place it was in the preceding moment. "Therefore", Edwards concludes, "the existence of created substances, in each successive moment, must be the effect of the immediate agency, will, and power of GOD."⁵⁷ Even if we allow, he adds, that the course of nature can continue an existence once given, we must remember that nature is "nothing, apart from the agency of God",⁵⁸ and therefore to say a thing is preserved in existence by nature is to recognize it is upheld by Him. To say that God preserves in existence all created substance is equivalent to saying that He continuously creates these things out of nothing at each moment of their existence, for "those things would drop into nothing, upon the ceasing of the present moment, without a new exertion of the divine power to cause them to exist in the following moment."⁵⁹ His continuous bringing into being of created substance differs from the first creation only in the circumstance that no effects of God's power had preceded His first creation.

⁵⁶ Edwards, Original Sin, Works, Vol. II, p. 352.

⁵⁷ *ibid*, p. 353.

⁵⁸ *ibid*, p. 353.

⁵⁹ *ibid*, p. 353.

If creation is continuous, then at each moment of time new effects come into existence. They are not the same as any past existence, though they may be like it. Now the fact that we identify any new effect with a past existence is due entirely to the "arbitrary constitution of the Creator." God Himself "treats them as one, by communicating to them like properties, relations, and circumstances; and so, leads us to regard and treat them as one." ⁶⁰ By saying that the constitution is arbitrary, Edwards explains, he means only that it is a constitution that depends on nothing but the divine will. In this sense, he says, the whole course of nature is an arbitrary constitution. "Thus it appears, if we consider matters strictly, there is no such thing as any identity or oneness in created objects, existing at different times, but what depends on God's sovereign constitution." ⁶¹ To deny this is to imply that identity is a character of certain things distinct from and prior to any divine constitution, and this has been disproved. God may, therefore, if He wishes, identify Adam and his posterity in respect to sin. "And I am persuaded", he concludes, "that no solid reason can be given, why God...may not establish a constitution whereby the natural posterity of Adam....should be treated as one with him, for the derivation either of righteousness, and communion in rewards, or of the loss of righteousness, and consequent corruption and guilt." ⁶²

⁶⁰ Edwards, Original Sin, Works, Vol. II, p. 356.

⁶¹ *ibid*, p. 357.

⁶² *ibid*, p. 358.

That the identity of Adam and his posterity in the first sin is, while in one sense arbitrary, yet directed by divine wisdom, appears in two things. In the first place, there is a beautiful analogy between it and other laws or constitutions, according to which, through the whole system of vital nature in the world, everything is derived from the first of its kind and has exactly the qualities of the first member of the species. In the second place, the wisdom is shown in the good consequences of the union. For since the manner of mankind's coming into existence naturally unites them, making ^{them} socially one, it is far better that they be in the same moral state, and not that some be perfectly innocent and happy while others are wholly corrupt and condemned to perfect misery.

In this defense of his theory that we are identical with Adam in his first sin Edwards' philosophical idealism reasserts itself. This has been noted by several students of his thought. H. Norman Gardiner⁶³ remarks that his exposition of God's continuous creation is perhaps the nearest approach to a restatement of his early idealism that we have in his theological works. Professor Egbert C. Smyth⁶⁴, the greatest authority on Edwards' idealism, also sees here a reappearance of it. A.V.G. Allen says: "We have here again the principle of Berkeley carried beyond the sphere of sense

⁶³H. Norman Gardiner, *The Early Idealism of Edwards*, in *Jonathan Edwards; A Retrospect*, p. 152.

⁶⁴Egbert C. Smyth, "Idealism", in *The American Journal of Theology*, Vol. I, October 1897, p. 152.

perceptions to which Berkeley confined it, and regarded as controlling the whole range of human consciousness of intellectual activity. God is not only the universal mind which constitutes the substance of the external world, but He is also the essence which lies behind the phenomena of consciousness or mind." ⁶⁵

If Edwards in his idea of continuous creation was drawing on his idealistic philosophy, where, we may ask, did he get his idea of what constitutes identity? Professor Fisher remarks: "It is evident that Locke's curious chapter on Identity and Diversity put Edwards on the track on which he advanced to these novel opinions." ⁶⁶ Now it is entirely possible, in fact almost certain, that Edwards' reading of Locke set the former to thinking on the subject of identity. But beyond this the indebtedness apparently ceases. A comparison of them will show that there are fundamental differences between Edwards' and Locke's treatments, differences which indicate that Edwards was doing some original thinking.

In the first place, Edwards differs from Locke in noting that philosophical reasoning about the nature of identity has a bearing on the question of original sin. If Locke was aware of, or interested in this, which is highly improbable, he does not mention it.

In the second place, even if Locke had applied his teaching to the question of our oneness with Adam, he would

⁶⁵ A.V.G.Allen, Life and Writings of Jonathan Edwards, pp 308-309.

⁶⁶ George Park Fisher, Discussions in History and Theology, p. 241.

have been led to disagree entirely with Edwards. His idea that personal identity consists in the same consciousness, and that this is the basis of responsibility for actions committed, is an absolute contradiction of the view that we participated in, and are guilty for Adam's first sin. We do not have the same consciousness with Adam, and therefore we are not, according to Locke, responsible for his acts. Further, Locke's view that we cannot identify what exists at different times unless it has continuous existence would contradict the assertion of our identity with Adam, except perhaps on the traducian hypothesis, which Edwards did not accept.

The mention of Locke's insistence upon continuous existence as essential to the identity of that which exists at separate times brings us to another feature in which Edwards is radically at variance with him. As we have seen, Edwards teaches a continuous creation, which means that all things are ceasing to be and beginning anew in every instant of time. We can identify things, he holds, which had separate beginnings; and therefore for Edwards, in contradistinction to Locke, the fact that Adam and we had different beginnings, that we are not a continuation of him, places no obstacle in the way of our being identical with him in the first sin.

A further important respect in which Edwards departs from Locke is the former's insistence that there is nothing in the nature of things existing in successive moments to lead us to identify them,- that our identifications are due to the "arbitrary constitution of the Creator". Locke would

probably agree that there is nothing in the nature of the things which guarantees it to be the same today as it was yesterday except its continuing to be. But Edwards would reply that we have no proof of continuous existence,- in fact, he would insist that we have proof to the contrary,- and that in default of this proof we cannot be certain, on Locke's principles, but that we might sometimes identify two things which are just alike yet distinct. Things are identical, he emphasizes, only because God makes them so, and causes us to perceive the identity. Edwards thus diverges from Locke not only on the question of what we may identify, but also on that of why we identify what we do.

It is barely possible that one brief passage in Locke reveals some affinity to Edwards' view that the identity of objects is due to God's arbitrary constitution. Locke raises the question why our consciousness may not sometimes represent to us that certain past actions were ours, which we never performed, in other words, why we may not make mistakes about the identity of certain actions. Why this is not possible, he says, "will be difficult to conclude from the nature of things." ⁶⁷ The only guarantee we can give, he says, is "the goodness of God", who will not permit us to make such a fatal error. This seems to conform closely to Edwards' position that we do not identify things because of their nature, but because of God's constitution. That

⁶⁷ John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Vol. I, Bk. II, p. 315. (Italics ours).

this may have suggested to Edwards his view, however, is doubtful. It must be remembered that his theory is in harmony with his youthful idealism, and it may be that this, rather than the few sentences in Locke, was the source of the idea.

It is clear then that the originality of Edwards' theory of identity, at least so far as Locke is concerned, can hardly be questioned. He has thought for himself, and on this subject, he has thought more deeply than Locke. And if Locke is not the source of his thought at this point, it must be referred to his own genius. There is no other source from which it could have come. For the theory, as he develops it, and particularly its application to Adam, is unique.

2. Criticism of the Federal Theory as Edwards Presents It

Let us now turn to a critical examination of Edwards' presentation of the federal theory. We shall note first the Scriptural proofs he gives of Adam's headship of the race, and then his theory of our literal identity with him in the first sin.

Edwards derives two proofs of the federal relationship from the first three chapters of Genesis. The first is to the effect that, since certain other remarks addressed to Adam in the second person singular obviously included his posterity, so might the threat of eternal death. In proof of the assertion that other remarks did include his descendants he instances the fact that the things promised, or threatened, to Adam affected them just as they did him,- his posterity

replenished the earth, returned to dust, and were affected by the curse on the ground, etc. Hence, reasons Edwards, the promises and threats must have referred also to Adam's descendants. And if so, the same must have been true of the threat of death, even though it was given in the second person singular. Now it is true that, if we take Genesis literally, this argument lends a certain credibility to Edwards' view. But the fact that there is no ground for the interpretation, and that, indeed, the literal reading of it limits the threat to Adam, seriously weakens the argument. Further, the mere fact that the things mentioned did come upon Adam's descendants is no proof that they came in pursuance of the promises and threats to Adam. It shows only that these promises and threats could have applied to his posterity, not that they actually were represented as so doing when they were made. And finally, even if they did, the inference that the threat of death also did is based only on an analogy.

Edwards' second proof from Genesis is based on the protevangelium, but this is a rank case of "spiritualizing" the Scripture. The prophecy made is simply that the seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head. Why not take it literally, if we are to regard Genesis as literal history? But this raises a fundamental question,- the question of the literalness of the first three chapters of Genesis as a historical record,- and thus further weakens Edwards' exegesis.

In presenting his Scriptural proofs of the federal theory we mentioned the fact that, in addition to his argu-

ments drawn from Genesis, Edwards cited many proof-texts, and gave an extended exegesis of the passage in Romans 5. 12-21. We shall not however dwell any longer on his Biblical arguments. We have already seen from our study of Paul that the doctrine, as Edwards develops it, cannot be found even in the famous passage, Romans 5. 12-21; and we noted then also that it could not be regarded as taught in the first three chapters of Genesis, nor, for that matter, in the rest of Scripture.

Let us now turn to Edwards' assertion and defense of our identity with Adam in the first sin. It should be noted that there are no ethical objections in his view, such as can be brought against the federal theory of the imputation of Adam's sin. As we have seen, in making posterity active in participating in Adam's sin, Edwards is not going the length of imputing to one man another's sin and guilt, but is really only imputing to each man his own sin and his own guilt. If I am identical with Adam in the first sin, then it is my sin.

But the theory is patently untenable as violating in the strongest degree the fact of individuality. Whatever be the ground of our consciousness of personal identity, the testimony of that consciousness is unmistakable,- we are utterly distinct from Adam, and in no sense one moral person with him in any single act. Edwards' theory is highly ingenious, but it is doubtful, as someone has said, whether he convinced even himself. He was attempting a philosophical feat even more daring, if possible, than the ethical feat attempted by the federal theory in holding us responsible for

another individual's sin. The impossibility of his position is further manifested when we consider the fact that to assert our personal identity with Adam in sin is to ignore time completely. Edwards would reply, of course, that as he has shown, a man may be identified with a child born forty years before. But even if we grant this, that is a very different thing from identifying one human act with the act of another individual, which took place ⁱⁿ millenniums before, an identification which involves the assertion that wills yet uncreated participated in Adam's act in Eden. True, Edwards points out in defense of his position that the physical sin is not the same, and that the identity consists in the consent of the heart to the sinful tendency in our nature. But this is inconsistent with his position that our sinful nature is the result of our participation with Adam in the first sin. Even, then, if he could intelligibly distinguish between the physical and the inner act, he is compelled to agree that our wills acted with Adam's in a particular volition at a definite time in the past. It is hardly necessary to press the matter further,- that we are morally and spiritually distinct from Adam all will agree, even the imputationist who thinks of Adam as our representative.

Not only is it true that the fact of our individuality is an insuperable objection to Edwards' theory, but it should be noted that Edwards has not really offered proof of the point he should prove. What he attempts to prove in his discussion of the nature of identity is simply that God can

identify what He will. But even though we agree with him in this, and forbear entering upon the abstruse philosophical problems raised by his discussion of the theory of identity, it does not follow that, as a matter of fact, God has identified Adam and his posterity in respect of Adam's first sin. The argument may be good so far as it goes, but it does not go far enough. It needs to be proved not only that such an identification is possible, but also that it has actually been made. Nor is it enough to show, if it could be shown, that the Bible teaches the federal headship of Adam. For that federal headship is susceptible of other interpretations than that given it by Edwards' theory of identity. It may mean simply, as the federal theology held, that Adam was the race's representative, and that his sin, though we did not actively consent to it, was imputed to us. Hence Edwards' Biblical proofs, even if they proved the federal headship, are not supports of his identity theory. Ingenious, therefore, as it is, we must dismiss his defense of the doctrine of identity as being far from convincing.

CHAPTER VIII

THE GRACE OF GOD

We proceed next to a study of Edwards' teaching on the subject of divine grace. There are two chief sources of his thought, one, his Treatise on Grace, posthumously published, and the other, his miscellaneous remarks Concerning Efficacious Grace. Like his remarks Concerning the Divine Decrees, this latter is a completely unorganized mass of material. The major ideas are endlessly repeated and a bewildering number of actual and possible Arminian evasions are run to the ground. The two sources, however, afford an opportunity to enter fully into Edwards' thought on the subject of grace.

He does~~not~~ discuss the relationship of efficacious grace to the decree of election. It is clear, however, that grace means to him what Moffatt calls "the under side of election". Saving grace is God's activity in election, as that activity is experienced by the elect. Decreeing is willing, he tells us, and therefore the decree of election is God's willing the salvation of certain individuals, including the means to their salvation, which, obviously, includes the operation of grace. Our problem, therefore, is to ascertain Edwards' conception as to how the operation of grace on man takes place and what its results are.

He begins his Treatise on Grace by pointing out that the term may signify either (1) diverse kinds of influence of God's Spirit on men, or (2) diverse fruits of that influence. The diverse kinds of influence are two in number, "common" and "saving", or "efficacious" grace,- here Edwards is following the traditional Calvinistic distinction. The diverse fruits are the fruits of common and of saving grace. For the purposes of this thesis, in which we are limiting ourselves to determinism in Edwards' thought, it is grace as an influence of God upon man in which we are primarily interested.

It will clarify our thought, however, if we pause here for a moment to note the chief difference between common and saving grace in regard to their fruits. Edwards goes beyond Augustine and Calvin in ascribing common grace to the non-elect, but he includes among its fruits many things which by these older thinkers were attributed to nature. He did not deny that the fruits of common grace were "natural", indeed he insisted upon it, but he felt that even natural blessings had their source in divine grace. The fruits of common grace include almost everything that lifts man above the merely animal level, except the capacity to exercise saving faith. The existence of human government, the amenities and affections of family life, the duties and virtue which human society involves, the moralities of common life, even conscience itself,- these and most other human values are the result of common grace. Scripture promises, the sending of Christ, etc., are even included. This grace is essential to

the ordering of the world, and is a condition for the effectiveness of saving grace. Its fruit is not merely the production of these goods just mentioned, but also the prevention of evil. It is, he says, in his dissertation, Men are Naturally God's Enemies, the only thing that restrains us from "anything that is bad."¹ Only through common grace is the world prevented from going rapidly to destruction.

The fruit of saving grace is the Holy Spirit's dwelling in the soul of the elect man, together with what follows from this. We find this conception all through Edwards' works, and it is dwelt upon at length in the Treatise on Grace. There he says: "So that true saving grace is no other than that very love of God - that is, God, in One of the Persons of the Trinity, uniting Himself to the soul of a creature, as a vital principle, dwelling there and exerting Himself by the faculties of the soul of man, in His own proper nature, after the manner of a principle of nature."² Again, "I suppose there is no other principle of grace in the soul than the very Holy Ghost dwelling in the soul and acting there as a vital principle."³

As a result of this indwelling of God in the soul there is imparted to it a "divine and supernatural light". In his famous sermon on this subject he undertakes to establish the doctrine, "That there is such a thing as a spiritual and

¹Edwards, Men are Naturally God's Enemies, Works, Vol. V, p.307.

²Edwards, Treatise on Grace, in Selections from the Unpublished Writings of Jonathan Edwards, (A.B.Grosart, Editor), p. 53.

³ibid, p. 55.

divine light, immediately imparted to the soul by God, of a different nature from any that is obtained by natural means."⁴ Edwards often speaks of saving grace as consisting in this illumination, though it is always made clear that the illumination flows from the indwelling Spirit. This illumination amounts, so he tells us in his Treatise Concerning Religious Affections, to a special spiritual sense. In the regenerate man there is added a new sense,- added over and above the natural faculty, "a supernatural sense", giving us a "new inward perception or sensation", clarifying our grasp of truth, etc. "From these things it is evident", he says, "that those gracious influences of the saints, and the effects of God's Spirit which they experience, are entirely above nature, and altogether of a different kind from any thing that men find in themselves by the exercise of natural principles. No improvement of those principles that are natural, no advancing or exalting of them to higher degrees, and no kind of composition will ever bring men to them; because they not only differ from what is natural, and from every thing that natural men experience, in degree and circumstances, but also in kind; and are of a nature vastly more excellent. And this is what I mean by supernatural, when I say, that gracious affections are from those influences that are supernatural."⁵ As the result of this possession by the Spirit, with its il-

⁴ Edwards, Divine and Supernatural Light, etc., Works, Vol. VIII, p. 5. (For full title see Bibliography).

⁵ Edwards, Treatise Concerning Religious Affections, Works, Vol. IV, p. 108.

lumination, man is led to exercise saving faith.

With this comparison of common and saving grace as to their fruits in men, let us move on to study Edwards' doctrine of grace as an influence of God's Spirit on men. For we are concerned primarily with the relationship of God and man in the giving and receiving of grace. Now the distinction he draws between common and saving grace, as kinds of divine influence, is that common grace is "natural", while saving, is "supernatural" or "spiritual". "Common grace differs from special, in that it influences only by assisting of nature; and not by imparting grace, or bestowing anything above nature...But in the renewing and sanctifying work of the Holy Ghost, those things are wrought in the soul that are above nature, and of which there is nothing of the like kind in the soul by nature."⁶ Common grace is God's action upon men through the established laws and processes of nature. It is gracious in its origin, but natural in its method of influence. Saving grace, on the other hand, is "supernatural", not only in the nature of its fruit in man's soul, but also in its method of influence, being an action of God upon man mediated by no natural laws or forces whatever. It is a purely spiritual process, and so far as the natural world is concerned it is miraculous. Both common and efficacious grace are determining in the influence, and thus in the feature which is most significant for us they do not differ. Edwards' works on grace deal, however, chiefly

⁶Edwards, Divine and Supernatural Light, etc., Works, Vol. VIII, pp 5-6.

with efficacious grace, which of course is of primary importance in his theological system. For this reason, and because our study of his theory of freedom has included everything in his doctrine of common grace which bears on determinism in his system, we shall devote our attention now to his teaching on the subject of efficacious grace.

Edwards distinguishes two questions relating to efficacious grace, which, he says, are "controverted between us and the Arminians." The two questions are as follows: "1. Whether the grace of God, in giving us saving virtue, be determining and decisive. 2. Whether saving virtue be decisively given by a supernatural and sovereign operation of the Spirit of God: or, whether it be only by such a divine influence or assistance, as is imparted in the course of common providence, either according to established laws of nature, or established laws of God's universal providence towards mankind."⁷ That is to say, does saving grace really differ from common? The question whether grace is a supernatural act is of no great significance to our study of determinism in Edwards, for in either case he regards grace as determining in its influence upon the finite will. To say that it is supernatural, is, for him, only another way of saying that it is determining, but it may be determining, he insists, without being supernatural. "I mention this (i.e., the question of whether saving grace is supernatural) as an

⁷ Edwards, Concerning Efficacious Grace, Works, Vol. VIII, p. 390.

entirely different question from the other, viz. Whether the grace of God, by which we obtain saving virtue, is determining or decisive. For that it may be, if it be given wholly in a course of nature, or by such an operation as is limited and regulated perfectly according to established invariable laws. For none will dispute that many things are brought to pass by God in this manner, that are decisively ordered by him, and are brought to pass by his determining providence."⁸ We address ourselves, therefore, to the question of what Edwards has to say of the efficacious or determining power of divine grace, leaving aside the proofs~~he~~ gives of its supernatural character.

To begin with, he insists that God either does all or nothing in bringing~~g~~about saving faith (or as he usually says, saving virtue) in a man. "The nature of virtue being a positive thing, can proceed from nothing but~~God's~~ immediate influence, and must take its rise from creation or infusion by God. For it must be either from that, or from our own choice and production, either at once, or gradually, by diligent culture."⁹ Any theory of cooperation between man and God~~reduces~~, once the camouflage is stripped away, either to a purely man-centered or God-centered affair. Arminians speak, he says, of man's making use of the common grace he already has in the exercising of saving virtue, and imply that both God and man have a part in the production of that

⁸Edwards, Concerning Efficacious Grace, Works, Vol. VIII, p. 391.

⁹ibid, p. 408.

virtue. But the crux of the matter is reached when we ask whether the fact that some men "improve" it, while others do not, is determined by God or man. In the final analysis the answer has to be one or the other, and this being so, saving virtue is due either wholly to God or wholly to man. For it is precisely this determining act that constitutes saving virtue.

This being the case, man, on the Arminian scheme, is wholly responsible for the exercise of saving virtue. For it is of the essence of Arminianism that man has the free will to decide whether he will make use of the divine assistance he has. However much the Arminian may stress the fact of God's aid, it is man who, in his sovereign freedom, determines whether that aid will be utilized in the exercise of saving faith. In the conclusion of a long paragraph in which he discusses this question, Edwards says: "From the latter part of the above discourse, it appears that, according to Arminian principles, men's virtue is altogether of themselves, and God has no hand at all in it."¹⁰

According to Edwards, on the other hand, God does all. "In efficacious grace we are not merely passive, nor yet does God do some, and we do the rest. But God does all, and we do all. God produces all, and we act all. For that is what he produces, viz. our own acts. God is the only proper author and fountain; we only are the proper actors."¹¹ This

¹⁰ Edwards, Concerning Efficacious Grace, Works, Vol. VIII, p. 420.

¹¹ *ibid*, p. 415.

statement, typical of what one finds all through Edwards' works on efficacious grace and the sermon, God Glorified in Man's Dependence, makes it clear beyond doubt that God's grace is determining and decisive in a man's acquiring saving faith. Hence to God belongs the full responsibility and glory. Such a position, of course, follows inevitably from what Edwards believes as to man's fallen condition,- a condition which makes it impossible for him to do anything himself toward his own salvation.

The imparting of saving faith by God to man takes place, not through the ordinary laws of nature, but by a special, arbitrary, divine intervention, the act being in reality a miracle and thus supernatural. To become the object of God's gracious activity, no conditions in man, no preparatory acts, are necessary or of use. "And is there any man that will assert, that God has absolutely or peremptorily promised his saving grace to any man that ever stirs hand or foot, or thinks one thought in order to his salvation?"¹² The production of saving faith is an operation in which God influences man's heart immediately, changing his disposition by the exercise of divine power, so that man instantaneously puts forth saving virtue. "Hereby Christ shews his great power. He does but speak the powerful word, and it is done. - He does but call, and the heart of the sinner immediately cometh, as was represented by his calling his disciples, and their immediately following him."¹³

¹²Edwards, Concerning Efficacious Grace, Works, Vol. VIII, p. 394.

¹³ibid, p. 426.

This conception of God's immediate action upon man, Edwards asserts, is open to no objection to which a doctrine of the sovereign freedom of man is not open. "There is no objection to God's producing any effects, or causing any events, by any immediate interposition, producing effects arbitrarily, or by the immediate efforts of his will, but what lies equally against his ordering it so, that any effects should be produced by the immediate interposition of men's will, to produce effects otherwise than the established laws of nature would have produced without men's arbitrary interposition." ¹⁴

Now this is of course thoroughgoing determinism, but Edwards nevertheless insists that grace is not to be spoken of as being irresistible. "The dispute about grace being resistible or irresistible", he asserts, "is perfect nonsense." ¹⁵ Such a usage implies that the will resists the action of God's grace. The truth is that the will always follows the motive produced by the influence of divine grace in perfect harmony and subjection. Thus for the same reason that he would not speak of volitions as necessary in the popular sense of the term, i.e., as implying resistance on the part of the will, so he will not speak of grace as irresistible.

There is some evidence to indicate that Edwards did not conceive of the impartation of saving faith entirely as a personal relationship. In those places where he speaks of

¹⁴Edwards, Concerning Efficacious Grace, Works, Vol. VIII,
¹⁵ibid, p. 406. /pp 407-408.

the movement upon man by the Spirit, and of the Spirit's presence in man in the act of, and as the result of, the impartation of saving grace, the language does suggest that he conceives the relationship in terms of personal influence. "But he (i.e., the Spirit) unites himself with the mind of a saint, takes him for his temple, actuates and influences him as a new supernatural principle of life and action."¹⁶ The Spirit, dwelling in man, imparts a divine light. "A true sense of the divine excellency of the things revealed in the word of God, and a conviction of the truth and reality of them thence arising."¹⁷ The effect of grace is to produce faith more through new "light" than through an alteration of the disposition, that is, more through an appeal to the mind than a transformation of the nature. But more often the implication of his language is that he conceives of grace as a sort of impersonal, physical energy, by which God secures effects upon men through an alteration of their natures in a manner almost naturalistic. The term most frequently used to describe the imparting of grace is "infusion". The following quotation will illustrate the usage: "Those that deny infusion of grace by the Holy Spirit, must, of necessity, deny the Spirit to do anything at all. By the Spirit's infusing, let be meant what it will, those who say there is no infusion, contradict themselves."¹⁸ Now "infusion" is hardly the term to characterize the action of one personality upon

¹⁶ Edwards, Divine and Supernatural Light, etc., Works, Vol.

¹⁷ *ibid*, p. 8. /VIII, p. 6.

¹⁸ Edwards, Concerning Efficacious Grace, Works, Vol. VIII, p. 406.

another. It suggests rather the action of an impersonal force. On five occasions in his essay, Concerning Efficacious Grace Edwards actually speaks of the impartation of efficacious grace as a physical operation. "The opponents of efficacious grace and physical operation, may be challenged to shew that it is possible that any creature should become righteous without a physical operation, either a being created with the habit of righteousness, or its being immediately infused."¹⁹ The following quotation suggests even more strongly that efficacious grace operates in such a way as to make personal influence impossible: "All assistance of the Sp^hirit of God whatsoever, that is by any present influence or effect of the Spirit; any thing at all that a person converted from sin to God is subject of, through any immediate influence of the Spirit of God upon him, or any thing done by the Spirit, since the completing and confirming the canon of the scriptures, must be done by a physical operation either on the soul or body. The Holy Spirit of God does something to promote virtue in men's hearts, and to make them good, beyond what the angels can do. But the angels can present motives; can excite ideas of the words of promises and threatenings, etc. and can persuade in this way by moral means; as is evident, because the devils in this way promote vice."²⁰ The influence of the angels and the devils, it would seem, is personal, while God's is "physical",

¹⁹ Edwards, Concerning Efficacious Grace, Works, Vol. VIII,
²⁰ ibid, p. 407. / p. 409.

and, the implication is, impersonal. That Edwards would acknowledge the validity of this implication is hardly possible, in view of his conception of grace in terms of the indwelling Spirit. But it is there nevertheless, and as long as the relationship between God and man is thought of in terms of necessity, it cannot be wholly removed. Thoroughgoing determinism is incompatible with a personal relationship.

Having established the fact¹ that God,- whether by a personal, or an impersonal operation,- does determine the existence of "saving virtue", Edwards stresses the point that, as a result, all the glory of man's salvation belongs to Him. It is by means of saving virtue that salvation is achieved, and to be the cause of it, in his view, is to be the cause of salvation. As an illustration of this he asks us to consider how it would be if a third party were between us and God as the determiner of whether ~~or~~ not we should exercise saving virtue. If, says Edwards, this person determines that we shall have faith, and salvation results, we would not ascribe the glory to God, who was the giver. "On the contrary", to quote his own words, "would not this determining cause, whose arbitrary, self-determined, self-possessed, sovereign will, decides the matter, be properly looked upon as the main cause, vastly the most proper cause, the truest author and bestower of the benefit? would not he be, as it were, all in the cause? would not the glory properly belong to him, on whose pleasure the determination of the matter properly depended?"² It follows that if a man

²¹ Edwards, Concerning Efficacious Grace, Works, Vol. VIII, p. 402.

determines his own faith, he is really the cause of his own salvation and deserves the glory for it. This is precisely what Arminianism results in. "The Arminian scheme naturally, and by necessary consequence, leads men to take all the glory of all spiritual good (which is immensely the chief, most important and excellent thing in the whole creation) to ourselves; as much as if we, with regard to those effects, were the supreme, the self-existent and independent, and absolutely sovereign disposers."²² The only way for God to be the real author of our salvation is, therefore, for Him to determine our choice to exercise saving virtue.

Since he places the major emphasis upon God's determining our faith, Edwards necessarily thinks of God's grace almost wholly in terms of efficacious grace. The things usually spoken of as making up His common grace hold a very negligible place in his scheme. Even God's love in sending Christ, and His mercy and forgiveness in offering salvation on condition of faith in Christ are rarely spoken of as examples of grace. In the essay, Concerning the Divine Decrees, he makes the statement that "there is a necessary connection between faith in Jesus Christ and eternal life. Those that believe in Christ must be saved, according to God's inviolable constitution of things."²³ That eternal life is freely offered to faith is regarded as a matter of fact,- not as a matter of grace. Similarly the revelation of God and His

²² Edwards, Concerning Efficacious Grace, Works, Vol. VIII, p. 424.

²³ Edwards, Concerning the Divine Decrees, Works, Vol. VIII, p. 376.

appeals to mankind in the Scripture, since that is open to everyone, is of little importance as illustrating His grace. Moreover, the gift of the capacity to accept Christ, which the Arminians held to belong to man, coupled with the promises to those who accept, and the inducements to acceptance, are regarded as of minor value and weight, for they constitute only the opportunity for salvation. It is he who determines its acceptance and not he who gives the opportunity, who deserves the credit for salvation. "He may be said to be the giver of money that offers it to us, without being the proper determiner of our acceptance. But it is in the acceptance of offers, and the proper improvement of opportunities, wherein consists virtue."²⁴ Common grace is thus practically no grace at all; it is only efficacious grace that is of real significance.

The question naturally arises why Edwards centers the emphasis on the determining of the act of saving faith. Why is it that God's favor in "common grace" is so minimized? Why does he feel that for man to be the cause of his faith is for him to rob God of all the glory? Why can he not conceive of God's giving salvation to faith, and His making faith itself possible, as being of vastly greater importance in salvation than the mere act of accepting the gift? Perhaps the chief reason is that God's sovereignty, which he is primarily concerned with magnifying, is exhibited in the determining of the act of saving faith, rather than in His

²⁴ Edwards, Concerning Efficacious Grace, Works, Vol. VIII, p. 424.

love and mercy in the sending of Christ, etc.

But there is another factor which without doubt plays a part in determining Edwards' emphasis in this matter. It is the fact that he regards saving faith as an act of merit, to which salvation must be given as a deserved, and even necessary reward. In his discourse, Concerning Faith, he does justice to the receptive nature of the act of faith, speaking of it as believing, accepting, trusting, receiving, etc. At one point he defines it as follows: "Upon the whole, the best and clearest, and most perfect definition of justifying faith, and most according to the scripture, that I can think of, is this, faith is the soul's entirely embracing the revelation of Jesus Christ as our Saviour." ²⁵ From this it would seem that he regards faith simply as an act of humble acceptance of God's gift, not as an act which God is rewarding. But when he thinks on the question of where the responsibility for the existence of faith is to be located, he appears to regard faith as a meritorious act. His customary term for it becomes, as we have seen in a number of the quotations above, "saving virtue". It is something which deserves a reward, and which thus makes man eligible for salvation. It may be a trusting appeal to God, an act of grateful acceptance, but it is also a "virtue", a spiritual attribute partaking more of the nature of "work" than of faith in the Pauline and evangelical sense. It is, he says, a thing in which men are apt to glory, as they might glory in

²⁵ Edwards, Concerning Faith, Works, Vol. VIII, p. 495.

any other accomplishment. "Virtue is not only the most honourable attainment, but it is that which men, on the supposition of their being possessed of it, are more apt to glory in, than in any thing else whatsoever. For what are men so apt to glory in as their own supposed excellency, as in their supposed virtue?" ²⁶

This tendency to regard faith as a work was natural to one who followed the Calvinistic emphasis upon the holy life as distinct from the Lutheran emphasis upon the receptive nature of faith. But with such a conception of saving faith there is little wonder that he considered the causing of it as a major element in man's salvation. For such a faith, or better, such a "virtue", really obligates God to give salvation to its possessor. "Saving virtue", so conceived, becomes in reality the cause of salvation. It was perfectly logical then for Edwards to reason that, if man, as the Arminians held, produces the "saving virtue", he is the author of his own salvation, God having no glory in the affair. Hence to prevent man's glorying in his own "virtue" and attributing salvation to his possession of it, God must be regarded as the determiner of faith.

This completes the presentation of Edwards' ideas as to the nature and operation of divine grace. His chief proof of the reality of efficacious grace is man's inability to put forth saving faith of himself, and consequent utter dependence upon God in the exercise of it. This inability has

²⁶ Edwards, Concerning Faith, Works, Vol. VIII, p. 423.

been emphasized in the treatise on Original Sin, and needs no reiteration here. The fact that the doctrine of determining grace follows naturally from that of the divine decrees means, of course, that the arguments supporting the latter also support it.

Let us now make a critical examination of the doctrine of grace as Edwards has presented it. That it cannot suffice for us today as an adequate interpretation of God's saving influence upon man is apparent. We have already noted several weaknesses in his conception,- the tendency to think of grace in impersonal terms, despite his insistence upon the indwelling Spirit, the portrayal of faith as of the nature of a good work, and the minimizing of the saving efficacy of such gracious acts as the revelation of God in Scripture, the sending of Christ, and our endowment with conscience. In addition to these things there lie against Edwards' doctrine all those objections that can be brought, in the name of God's character and of our moral nature, against a theory of unconditional^{and} discriminative election, of which it is an integral part. Moreover, the theory is open to all the objections to determinism in the name of moral agency. Even if we concede that Edwards is thinking of the operation of grace upon us in personal terms, his deterministic account leaves only a very meagre role for the human personality to play,- a new illumination is produced in us, which in turn produces a new motive, which gives rise to the new volition of faith. The act of faith, as Edwards himself says, is produced in us; it is certainly not, in any full sense, produced

by us. And at bottom the theory constitutes a complete denial of genuine freedom. It is a theory of necessity, and as such excludes any power of contrary choice, and therefore any moral responsibility. The act of faith is not free, not morally significant, not real. Instead of the personal response of an individual to God's drawing, faith is God's own act, which, when He has produced it, He rewards.

This last thought suggests another inconsistency in Edwards, which should be pointed out here. He has taken the position that man is responsible for his volitions, however they may be determined. On the basis of this, he lays upon him the full responsibility for his sins, and by parity of reasoning, he should regard him as responsible for the volition exerted in the act of faith. Since we are responsible for volition and its consequences, regardless of how or whence the volition comes into being, we should therefore at least share with God the credit for our faith. God's part would be primary and most significant, but man would not be utterly devoid of any credit in the process. To grant man any credit would, of course, be repugnant to Edwards, but this is nevertheless the implication of his view that we are responsible for all volitions.

A further word as to the implications of determinism for the conception of salvation by grace should be added. Granting, for the moment, that "works" and faith may be morally significant and responsible acts even though determined, it is nevertheless true that the doctrine of efficacious grace destroys largely the distinction between "the law" and

grace. For it regards man in both cases as being unable to fulfil the conditions of salvation. If he is to be saved by faith, God must work in him that which is necessary. But the same was true under the conception that he was to be saved by "works of the law". Under the new covenant God does all, but so it was under the old; under the new covenant man is left no ground for boasting, but the same was true, seeing that God produced the works, under the old. The upshot of the situation is that the old covenant was as gracious as is the new. In both cases man can do nothing to deserve salvation or to receive it; and therefore in both cases it is given unconditionally. Thus the real distinction between faith and works is obliterated,- and this is true even though faith and works are in themselves different. For the significant fact is that, however the acts may differ, God does all.

Indeed faith and "works" play no part in determining the individual's salvation,- this is determined by God's inscrutable decree, and it is all one whether He carry out His decree toward the elect person by producing in him "works" or faith as the basis of his salvation. Since God produces them, and they are both of grace, it is as appropriate that one be produced as the other, and God can as easily produce one as the other. Why He should elect to produce faith in those He saves rather than works is beyond us, and must be referred simply to His sovereign and arbitrary will.

The new covenant is thus completely stultified; it is

heralded as something new, as God's making salvation a free gift, but as a matter of fact, according to the determinist, He has been doing this all along. Salvation has never been an achievement of man; it has never been suspended on human merit. Only when man is regarded as the author of his own "works" or faith does the real distinction between the covenants emerge. For only then can the difference between the nature of a work of merit and an act of humble and grateful acceptance be taken account of.

CHAPTER IX

THE PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS

The doctrine of the perseverance of the saints is closely related to that of efficacious grace. In fact, it is simply the theory that efficacious grace continues to operate in those in whom it has once begun to operate, leading them on in Christian endeavors and in the life of faith. We shall now turn to Edwards' teaching on this subject, which is contained in an essay, entitled, Concerning the Perseverance of Saints.

That the continuous operation of grace is necessary to salvation is a presupposition of the doctrine. Edwards is very emphatic on this point. "Perseverance in faith is, in one sense, the condition of justification; that is, the promise of acceptance is made only to a persevering sort of faith; and the proper evidence of its being of that sort is actual perseverance."¹ As he says in the quotation just given, perseverance is not only necessary to salvation, but it is in reality necessary to justification. He was not satisfied with the customary way in which Calvinistic thinkers explained perseverance to be a sine qua non of salvation,- he wanted the manner in which it is necessary to be

¹Edwards, Concerning the Perseverance of Saints, Works, Vol. VIII, p. 435.

made clearer. The truth of the matter is, he insisted, that we are justified only by that faith which has the quality of perseverance in it from the beginning. "Faith (on our part) is the great condition of salvation; it is that by which we are justified and saved. But in this faith, the perseverance that belongs to it is a fundamental ground of the congruity that faith gives to salvation. Perseverance indeed comes into consideration, even in the justification of a sinner, as one thing on which the fitness of acceptance to life depends. For, God has respect to perseverance as being virtually in the first act. And it is looked upon as if it were a property of that faith by which the sinner is then justified."² This position is clearly and emphatically stated also in his Discourse on Justification by Faith Alone.

Now God, through the operation of divine grace, guarantees the perseverance of the elect in faith in the same way that he does the initial act of faith in conversion. "God, when he had laid out himself to glorify his ~~his~~ mercy and grace in the redemption of poor fallen men, did not see meet, that those who are redeemed by Christ, should be redeemed so imperfectly, as still to have the work of perseverance left in their own hands."³ The work is taken completely out of man's hands,- he commits his soul to Christ for safe-keeping, and is thereby assured that he will not fall. "It is ~~is~~ one act of faith to ~~to~~ commit the soul to Christ's keeping in this sense, viz. to keep it from falling. The believing soul is convinced of its own weakness and ~~and~~ helplessness, its inability to resist its enemies, its insufficiency to keep itself,

² Edwards, Concerning the Perseverance of Saints, Works, Vol. VIII,
³ *ibid.*, p. 436. / p. 442.

and so commits itself to Christ, that he would be its keeper." ⁴

Grace is necessary to insure the perseverance of man for the same reason that it is necessary to convert him, namely, because of his inability. Edwards' discussion of the inability of the converted man to persevere in his own strength is interesting both in itself and for his references to the doctrine of original righteousness and the fall. Adam, he reminds us, was not able to persevere in righteousness, although the Holy Spirit had been communicated to him in such a way that he had no lust or sinful principle, because he was left to his own strength to persevere, without the "extraordinary occasional assistance" of divine grace. And if Adam, who had no sinful propensity in his nature, was not immune to falling, redeemed man is, in his own strength, even less able to avoid it, "because man's strength is exceedingly less than it was then, and he is under far less advantages to persevere." ⁵ The operation of grace in leading to his conversion has not eradicated the evil propensity which has characterized man since the fall. If the elect did not have something beyond their own strength on which to depend, they would be certain to fall. "The perseverance on which life was suspended, depended then (i.e., before the fall) indeed on the strength of mere man: but now (on the supposition) it would be suspended on the strength of fallen man." ⁶

⁴Edwards, Concerning the Perseverance of Saints, Works, Vol. VIII, p. 441.

⁵ibid, p. 437.

⁶ibid, p. 438.

The perseverance of the redeemed is thus entirely dependent upon a special operation of the Spirit, who is given to him, as He was at conversion, in an arbitrary and sovereign fashion. This special operation of the Spirit, this supernatural act of divine grace, follows the first act of faith, and comes in answer to it. "For it is by faith that we first perceive and know this righteousness (i.e., 'the righteousness of God'), and do at first receive and embrace it; and being once interested in it, we have the continuance of faith in the future persevering exercises of it made sure to us."⁷ Efficacious grace produces saving faith which in turn calls for further and continuous grace to guarantee perseverance. By virtue of this special grace vouchsafed to them the redeemed are insured against falling, as Adam, who was left to his own strength, never was. "The Spirit of God was given at first but was lost. God gives it a second time, never to be utterly lost. The Spirit is now given in another manner than it was then. Then indeed it was communicated, and dwelt in their hearts. But this communication was made without conveying at the same time any proper right or sure title to it. But when God communicates it the second time, as he does to a true convert, he withal gives it to him to be his own; he finally makes it over to him in a sure covenant."⁸ It is obvious that Edwards is put to it to discover a real difference between converted man and unfallen Adam,

⁷ Edwards, Concerning the Perseverance of Saints, Works,
Vol. VIII, p. 441

⁸ *ibid*, p. 447.

and that he really does not succeed. In both cases there is the possession of the Spirit, as the determining influence, and as far as his account is concerned, Adam was~~no~~ more left to his own strength than converted man. Edwards' real difficulty is not in explaining how, under the influence of efficacious grace, man can never fall, but how Adam, in the state of perfect righteousness, ever did.

There are various grounds mentioned by Edwards upon which we can be sure that, once truly converted, a man will persevere in his faith. "It is evident that the saints shall persevere", he says, "because they are already justified."⁹ This assertion is based upon his position that perseverance is necessary, not only to salvation, but also to justification. This position, however, begs the whole question at issue: to say that justification involves perseverance is simply to say that genuine faith, which is the basis for justification, never fails to persevere. Scripture, moreover, gives us no ground for this belief, for there the sinner is told simply that, if he has faith, he is justified in the eyes of God, and there is, to say the least, no suggestion that a real faith may not weaken and die. Another reason for the certain perseverance of the true convert is derived by Edwards from the nature of Christ's mediation. Christ "undertakes and becomes a surety for man to God",¹⁰ fulfilling the law and satisfying God's justice.

⁹ Edwards, Concerning the Perseverance of Saints, Works, Vol. VIII, p. 439.

¹⁰ *ibid*, p. 443.

He has already persevered for those who place their trust in Him. The Christian whose spiritual life is a participation with Christ in the life He received as risen from the dead is assured of infallible perseverance. Here, however, it is taken for granted that the Christian's faith, by which he relates himself to Christ, and enjoys the benefits of His mediatorship, will not falter. But this is again precisely the matter at stake,- it is not a question of what Christ has done, but of whether we can persevere in our acceptance of His gift. A third ground for belief in perseverance, equally unstable, is that God, having begun a gracious work in us, will certainly complete what He began. Having given us a victorious faith, He will not suffer that faith to be defeated. This argument obviously assumes the theory of efficacious grace, denying man's part in his conversion, and reposes for its final validity upon the doctrine of unconditional election. It depends upon the whole system of thought Edwards has been defending, and must meet all the criticisms which can be levelled at it.

In addition to these arguments, Edwards follows his usual custom and quotes Scriptural texts in proof of the doctrine of perseverance. Here, however, even more than elsewhere, there are numerous texts which place him decidedly upon the defensive. One of the chief difficulties is that raised by the frequency with which the Scripture contains cautions to the faithful against falling away. This difficulty he meets by the assertion that it is entirely proper to caution one against a fall, although it is certain

that he will not heed, and that these cautions do not at all imply the possibility of defection on the part of the truly righteous. Those who fall after apparently having been converted are only seemingly converted, and their righteousness is only external. As a matter of fact, there is a difference between the truly righteous and the seemingly righteous even before the latter reveal it by falling away. That Edwards should be driven to such statements to prove his doctrine Scriptural is itself sufficient to show the impossibility of any such proof.

Apart from the failure of his supporting arguments, there are a number of objections to his theory in itself. While the position with which he begins his discussion, - namely, that, if a man is to be finally saved, he must persevere in his faith, - is one to which no objection can be raised, it is going too far to say that justification depends on perseverance. The Scripture teaches us that when a man comes to God with genuine faith, he is received, but it does not identify genuine faith with persevering faith. Indeed, as we have seen, the Bible abounds in cautions to the faithful against falling away. As far as Scripture is concerned we have no ground for insisting that saving faith possesses a special quality from the beginning which makes it persevering, and which is a condition of justification. It is, to say the least, not unscriptural to believe that an individual may give up a faith at one time genuine, and thus forfeit his relation of justification with God.

Edwards' argument in proof of the fact that only God's

grace can guarantee perseverance ~~is~~ of course valid. Obviously if man is in a state of total depravity and complete inability, there could be no other guarantee than divine, efficacious grace that he would put forth a saving faith. And if he is possessed of freedom to exercise faith or not, there can of course be no guarantee of his persistence in faith. But the vital question is not whether man needs God's gracious action to make certain his perseverance, but whether there is any certainty of his persevering. Edwards' proof of this certainty, briefly noted above, ~~is~~ not convincing. In fact there are no independent proofs of the doctrine of perseverance. It rests upon the whole deterministic scheme of which it is a part, and stands or falls with it. If God determines all things, if He elects certain individuals to lasting salvation, and if He rescues them from perdition by special and determining grace, it follows that they will persevere in faith. But if the objections we have raised against these theories are valid, the doctrine of perseverance must go with them. Even apart from its dependence upon the system as a whole it is, being nothing more than the theory of the continued action of efficacious grace, in itself untenable as destructive of responsibility and of faith in any real and personal sense.

The doctrine of perseverance of the saints was given a religious appeal in the eyes of many because it was felt to be a ground for the assurance of salvation. It was felt that, once in the fold, the Christian could rest confident of remaining in it. To suppose our salvation suspended on

our own efforts would, says Edwards, "deprive the believer of the comfort, hope, and joy of salvation; which would be very contrary to God's design in the scheme of man's salvation, which is to make the ground of our peace and joy in all respects strong and sure."¹¹ But the belief in the certain perseverance of the elect in reality cannot be the ground of assurance on the part of any individual Christian that his faith will not fail. For no amount of belief in election and perseverance can furnish the assurance that one's faith is genuine. We can never know beforehand whether our faith may not be of the spurious kind which will some day fail us. The only assurance we can have is that we shall persevere, if ours is genuine faith. But then the man who denies the doctrine of perseverance has as much assurance. He too knows that he will be saved, if he perseveres in his faith. Thus the religious value which was supposed to be particularly supported by this doctrine is in reality no more supported by it than by the theory that man's perseverance depends partly upon his own free response to divine grace.

¹¹ Edwards, Concerning the Perseverance of Saints, Works, Vol. VIII, p. 440.

CHAPTER X

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF EDWARDS' DETERMINISM

With the doctrine of perseverance, we complete the study of determinism in the system of Edwards. When we consider his deterministic system as a whole, we cannot fail to be impressed with the fact that he was, indeed, a systematic theologian. We have noted minor inconsistencies, and we have noted the more serious confusion in his theory of the will, but it cannot be said that he was ever untrue to the deterministic principle. He applied the conception of necessity in every possible ramification of his theology, articulating each deterministic doctrine with the system as a whole. No one has ever been more thoroughgoing than Edwards in the extension of necessity to every act of God and of man, including even the first sin of Adam. And no one has ever defended it with more acumen or resourcefulness.

Looking back upon his system, as we have studied it, however, the most significant feature appears to be, not the precision of his exposition, nor the skill of his defense of the Calvinistic theology, but the fact that he undertook to vindicate it ethically. He was sufficiently impressed by the attacks on Calvinism current in his day to realize that it could not endure without demonstrating the

consistency of its conception of divine sovereignty with the deepest moral convictions of man. Calvin responded to the ethical criticisms of the doctrine of sovereignty usually by denying man's right to question God's ways. God's acts are right because God wills them, he said, if indeed the question of their rightness is to be raised at all. And man is to be held responsible for his sins, without its being necessary to show him free in any sense. If one asked how these things could be, Calvin warned him against intruding with his reason into the "sanctuary of the divine wisdom." With Edwards, however, it was different; he could not tether his reason. He had to justify God's ways with man, and to this stupendous, and from the Calvinistic standpoint, impossible, task, he bent his best efforts.

His attempted ethical vindication of Calvinism we see on almost every page of his works, and in the most varied connections. There were five significant positions, however, to which it led him. In the first place, it led him to the definite position that God's will is determined by His wisdom and love, and to an effort to show that His decrees are consistent with the divine wisdom and love. In the second place, Edwards' desire to show his theory of volition consistent with the moral agency of man led him to a curious insistence that man, although caught in the web of necessity, is in reality free. In the third place, we found him limiting responsibility to volitions and their results,- a position which seemed to be a step in the direction of limiting responsibility to real freedom. Again, we saw that in the

name of God's character, he tried to show that, though sin is decreed, and though Adam's first sin was completely determined, it is still true that God only permits sin, doing nothing positive to produce it. Finally, we had the doctrine of our personal identity with Adam in his first sin,- a doctrine developed because Edwards recoiled at the imputation of the moral state and desert of one individual to another. These five positions showed him making special efforts all along the line to strengthen the ethical foundations of Calvinism.

That Edwards failed in this attempt we have seen. Strive as he might, he could not present a thoroughgoing system of theological determinism which would not impugn the character of God and destroy the moral agency of man. Nowhere do we see better than in Edwards, who recognized the legitimacy of the ethical challenge to Calvinism, the impossibility of reconciling the latter with the demands of morality. For nowhere has a more able effort been made than we find in Edwards. His failure attests the fact that Calvinism is strongest when purest, that is to say, when it does not attempt to make its peace with ethics, but insists upon the conception of sovereignty as an ultimate truth, which needs no defense, and which reason has neither the ability nor the right to call into question.

The fact that Edwards failed to show theological determinism tenable on moral grounds is no more significant than the fact that he made the attempt. The history of the New England Theology would have been far different had he

done otherwise. As it was, he became the "Father of the New England Theology" in both of its two main divisions,- this must be admitted in spite of the indignant denial of it by some of Edwards' Calvinistic defenders. The old-line Calvinists could claim him as their master because of his fidelity to the doctrine of sovereignty in all its deterministic implications. But the left wing of New England thought, which continued the ethical attack on Calvinism and subsequently bore fruit in Universalism and Unitarianism, could also claim his authority. It could point not only to his insistence upon the necessity of showing Calvinism to be moral, but also to the positions he took in order to accomplish this, which we have already mentioned. Even Professor Hodge of Princeton, who strenuously insisted that Edwards was a defender of the "old Calvinism" against the "New Divinity", admitted that in his theory of identity and mediate imputation, he deviated from the straight and narrow path of Calvinism, and that the influence of his theory resulted in an attenuation of Calvinism among his followers. It can thus truly be said that Edwards was as much the forefather of New England Unitarianism as he was the defender of the "standard Calvinism".¹

As we seek to make a constructive statement upon the doctrines we have been studying, we are indebted to Edwards for showing convincingly that, if we yield allegiance to

¹ Charles Hodge, in *The Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review*, October 1858, p. 614ff.

ethical considerations, we must dispense with theological determinism. For his failure to produce a moral justification of Calvinism was due, not to any incapacity on his part, but to the fact that he was attempting the impossible.

PART III

TOWARD AN ADEQUATE THEORY

CHAPTER XI

THE FUNDAMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

We have completed our study of determinism in the theology of Edwards, and have found it in important respects an untenable theory. Our task is to undertake a solution of the problems raised. It will be helpful, as we begin the task, to clarify the situation by attempting to ascertain what are the criteria of an adequate theory of the relationship of the divine, to the human will. It is of course essential that any satisfactory theory should be self-consistent, that it should be framed in the light of recent scientific and philosophic thought, and that all relevant data should be taken into account. However, the chief criteria to guide us are the great truths which have been fought over in the long struggle between freedom and determinism in theological thought, and which we find testified to in the Bible,- truths which carry with them great values for the religious consciousness. No theory can be satisfactory which does not do justice to them. Let us ask, then, what these truths are.

I. The Sovereignty of God

The first we shall mention is the sovereignty of God. This is the truth which has been the watchword of determinism

in its theological form. We find it presented in unsystematic fashion and non-technical language in Scripture. It is one of the essential truths of Christianity, and includes supreme values for the religious consciousness. If we analyze more exactly the meaning of the conception, we find that there are three senses in which it is held, and valued, by the Christian.

(1) The divine sovereignty in the sense in which it comes homes closest to the Christian means God's independence in the exercise of His saving grace. The Christian feels that in His soteriological activity God is not constrained, nor obligated by anything in man. He is convinced that there is no way in which man can merit salvation, and that but for the fact that God in His grace enters human life, there would be no possibility of man's exercising saving faith. God, of His own accord, takes the initiative in salvation. As Paul expressed it: "For by grace have ye been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God."¹ This New Testament conception of salvation by grace alone became the "material principle" of the Reformation, and must be upheld today as of the very essence of Christianity.

(2) A second meaning which the conception of the divine sovereignty bears for the Christian is that God is in absolute control of His world. It is assumed that His creation and preservation of the world is inspired by a purpose,

¹Ephesians 2.8.

and the fact of His sovereignty is the guarantee that His purpose is being, and will be realized. There is no power external to God which can frustrate His plans. It is the conception of sovereignty in this sense which the doctrine of providence is designed to express. That this conviction is an essential of the Christian theistic faith need not be debated.

(3) We may take the idea of sovereignty, in the third place, as meaning that God is the being to whom omnipotence is to be attributed. This is the most abstract of the meanings we have distinguished, and draws most of its positive content from the idea of God as the absolute Governor of His world. Indeed these two ideas are correlative, each is essential to, and implies the other. They may, in fact, be thought of as only the two aspects of one idea. Yet they can be distinguished in thought, and for the purpose of clarity we shall treat them separately.

II. The Character of God

The second of the great truths which must be upheld by any satisfactory theory of the relation between the divine, and the human will is that the highest moral attributes attach to the character of God. It was in the name of God's holy nature that Arminianism launched many of its attacks on the deterministic system. Yet the perfection of God's character is not, of course, to be thought of as a partisan conception any more than His sovereignty. It is freely admitted by determinists, although some of their positions have seemed

to contradict it. We do not need then to defend, but only to point out the necessity of upholding God's justice, love, and mercy as we undertake a constructive statement upon the problems before us.

III. The Moral Agency of Man

The third of the great truths is the reality of man's moral agency. The importance of upholding this fact likewise need not to be proved, - it is axiomatic for the Christian that man must be portrayed by theology as a morally responsible creature. We have seen that both Edwards and the Arminians made desperate efforts to do this, which, while failing in both instances, nevertheless testified to their estimate of its importance.

God's character and man's moral agency are usually defended together against the supposed implications of His sovereignty, but it must not on this account be supposed that an adequate defense of one will suffice for the other. While they are closely related, they are nevertheless distinct, and must be individually established. The Arminians succeeded fairly well in upholding the character of God, but we have already seen that this success did not extend to their defense of moral agency. In fact it might be argued that the determinist has done more to establish the moral agency of man than the libertarian. In view of these things it is clear that we must regard the fact of man's moral agency independently as one of the great truths to be upheld in our constructive statement.

...

Our criteria for an adequate theory are now clear. We must attempt to develop a theory which is tenable in the light of modern science and philosophy, and which at the same time supports the three essential truths of Christian theism we have delineated. The fundamental problem is still the same that it has been for theology through the ages, namely, the problem of reconciling the fact of the divine sovereignty, with the facts of the perfection of the divine character and the reality of man's moral nature. The whole debate has been the result of the fact that one group has upheld God's sovereignty at the expense of His character and man's moral agency,- as we have seen to be the case with Edwards,- while the other group has sacrificed His sovereignty in the effort to defend His character and to portray man as morally responsible. Each group has always verbally affirmed, but too often constructively denied, the truths supported by the other. Nevertheless, since all three truths are affirmed as essential even by the contending parties, they must be regarded as ultimately reconcilable.

CHAPTER XII

THE PURPOSES AND DECREES OF GOD

In developing a constructive statement it appears best to approach the various doctrines to come before us in the order in which we have treated them in our exposition of Edwards. We begin, therefore, with the decrees of God, attempting to formulate a theory in the light of the criteria which we have recognized.

I. The Nature of God's Purposes and Decrees

It is an axiom of Christian theism that God is motivated by certain eternal purposes in the creation and government of the world. It is also axiomatic that He is no "deus ex machina" but that He is active in His world with a view to the realization of these ends. To grant this much is to grant that certain things come to pass as a result of what, to use the traditional term, we may call God's decrees. We can define a divine decree as God's predetermination of certain events with a view to effectuating His purposes. It is important that the decrees be distinguished from God's purposes. Every decree is inspired by a purpose, but it does not therefore follow that every end God has in view is the immediate object of a special decree. While none of His

purposes could be realized apart from His predetermining activity, it is possible that the achievement of a certain purpose may be conditioned also upon events which are not decreed.

From the teaching of Jesus and the New Testament as a whole it seems clear that God's fundamental purpose in regard to mankind is the enjoyment of fellowship with creatures made "in His image", and fit for fellowship with Him. It does not appear to be in harmony with the spirit of the New Testament to say that His creation of man and all His soteriological activity is due to His "mere good/pleasure". Nor does it sound quite like Jesus to say that God is motivated in saving certain men purely by the self-regarding desire of glorifying His attributes of goodness and mercy,- if indeed such an idea is self-consistent,- nor to say that He damns certain other men merely that His vindictive justice may be given a display. The loving Father-God whom Jesus revealed is a God who creates, and preserves, and suffers for His children, that He might have fellowship with them. To take this view is not to insinuate that God is insufficient in Himself without His creatures, nor to imply that He makes Himself only a means to the creature's happiness. It in no wise impairs His sovereignty, for He is as free and independent in framing His purpose of fellowship with man as He could be in determining to glorify Himself.

Pursuant to this fundamental purpose God creates man a moral agent. Only a being with the ability to appreciate right and wrong and act from moral inducements can develop a

character fit for fellowship with a holy God, or be capable of a genuine, morally significant love to God. But moral agency in the full sense involves more than the ability to distinguish right and wrong, and be appealed to by moral considerations,- it involves also, as we have seen, genuine freedom as the basis of moral responsibility. The necessity of freedom becomes all the more apparent when we approach the matter from the standpoint of God's desire for fellowship with man. Man must be capable of doing wrong in preference to right, of choosing sin in preference to Christ, of loving self before God, if he is to be capable of meaningful and worthwhile fellowship with His Maker.

It may be well to pause here and take note of an argument, which has been brought forward, to the effect that a created will cannot be creative, that is, possess the power of contrary choice. This is an entirely distinct attack on the conception of a spontaneous choice from any we have considered up to this point. It ~~does~~not assert that spontaneity does not exist, but rather that it could not even come into being. It ~~is~~not possible for God to endow a creature with the power of alternative choice,- this is the position. Now if we examine this reasoning it will reveal itself as a begging of the question, or perhaps more accurately, as a mere contradiction of the opposing position. What it asserts is simply that when God creates a will, He must create it as a determined will.

The argument is based on the assumption that man, who is himself the result of the divine creative act, cannot

therefore possess a creative capacity. When God acts in creation, a train of transeunt causation is begun and this cannot be interrupted. That is to say, we are not able to explain how this is possible. And this is quite true,- to be able to set forth just how God could endow a creature with freedom is beyond us. But this hardly constitutes a cogent argument against freedom, for the creation of anything is a mystery to us. Our inability to analyze the process is no refutation of the fact of creation, even when it is the creation of a free being. We need not therefore hesitate to recognize God's power to endow man with freedom of choice.

It will follow from the fact of man's power of contrary choice that God does not decree all things that come to pass. Those acts of man falling within the sphere of his own moral responsibility are by that very fact referable, not to God's decree, but to man's own will alone. This means that God does not decree sin, nor the rejection of Christ; and therefore, that He does not unconditionally decree the reprobation of any individual. Similarly, He does not decree men's good acts, nor the acceptance of Christ, nor, it follows, the unconditional salvation of any individual. In view of this, we cannot say that the realization of God's fundamental purpose with regard to man is directly decreed by Him. All His decrees, except that involving the punishment of those who reject Him, are indirectly designed to bring about that purpose, but it is not unconditionally decreed that any should have the perfect fellowship with Him, which is His chief end in the world. The achievement of God's fundamental

purpose even partially is conditional, - it depends upon man's use of his freedom.

On the other hand, most events are decreed. It is part and parcel of theism that God has decreed the course of nature, although natural science at the present time is at a loss to explain, in accordance with its law of cause and effect, just why small scale phenomena occur as they do. The only exceptions to God's predetermination of natural events are those events expressive of free volitions, but even these are largely conditioned by the antecedent physical process. Not only does God decree the course of nature, but He decrees a large percentage of human actions. Even the most insistent indeterminist will admit today that the majority of a man's acts are determined. Some of these may not be decreed, because they may result from characteristics which in turn have been produced by free volitions. But there remains a large number of acts, such as those due to instinct, fixed habit, etc., which can be traced in the final analysis to the predetermining activity of God. In addition to this, God decrees the connection between all volitions and their consequences, both in the natural, and in the moral and spiritual worlds. This is not to say that He unconditionally decrees the consequences of free volitions themselves, - they are not decreed, because the volitions are not decreed. He is responsible for the results of free volitions only to this extent, that He has made it certain that the results will follow, provided the volitions take place. Now we may use the term predestination to designate God's decrees with

respect to the actions, and the final destiny of man. Included in His total predestinating activity are two all-important decrees, to the consideration of which we now turn.

The first of these is the decree of election. In view of the fact that God's fundamental purpose is to enjoy the fellowship of His creatures, we can legitimately infer that it is His desire that no one of them should fail of that fellowship. But since He is a perfectly holy being, He can have fellowship only with a being who is morally fit for it; and since fellowship is a reciprocal relationship, the creature must further show his desire for fellowship in a real love for God. These are the indispensable prerequisites of fellowship with God, and are fulfilled only when the individual becomes rightly related to Jesus Christ. If men were not possessed of the freedom necessary to moral responsibility, God might guarantee the satisfaction of His desire to share His presence eternally with all His creatures simply by decreeing that all men should fulfil the conditions requisite to fellowship with Him. But in view of man's freedom, He issues a decree of election which takes the form of a predestination to everlasting life of those who freely accept Christ. No individual is unconditionally elected to the divine fellowship, but at the same time no one is unconditionally excluded from it. The decree applies not to individuals, but to a class, to all who render themselves eligible for eternal life.

The second of the decrees is that of reprobation. The freedom to meet, with God's help, the conditions of fellowship

with Him implies the freedom to reject those conditions. Those who persistently refuse to fulfil them are, by God's decree, excluded from His fellowship. For lack of a better term, and for the sake of continuity with the traditional usage, we may speak of this decree as ~~the~~ decree of reprobation. As we have just seen, no individual is arbitrarily punished with separation from God, the truth being that those who come to it do so against God's desire and fundamental purpose. He appoints no individual to punishment; He merely decrees the connection between wilful rejection of Him and the legitimate consequences of that rejection. It cannot be too strongly emphasized that there is nothing in God to make the reprobation of any individual an inevitability. Quite true, the punishment of those who reject Him takes place in accordance with God's justice, but this is far different from saying that the damnation of a certain number of individuals is ~~is~~ unconditionally demanded by God's justice as a means to its "shining forth". Further, the position here taken does not make the divine justice an inscrutable thing: there is no arbitrary discrimination between persons, irrespective of their moral and spiritual condition, nor is any individual punished for sins he could not avoid. There is nothing in God's dealings with men, as these dealings have been represented above, which could not be vindicated at the bar of Christian ethics.

The position here taken with regard to the decree of reprobation involves the assumption that God's nature being what it is, He must punish those who persistently reject Him.

This is in keeping with Christian theology, and, as Professor A. E. Taylor reminds us, is demanded by an ethical attitude toward sin. That the punishment consists essentially in separation from God is also in accordance with Christian teaching. This is the most serious punishment that can be meted out to the sinner, yet it is the natural and legitimate outcome of his conduct. To the question whether any individuals are doomed to eternal punishment, we are of course not able to return a positive answer, but the settlement of this point is manifestly not germane to our present purposes.

The theory we have advanced may be called a doctrine of limited decrees, in distinction from the deterministic position that all events, inclusive of all human volitions, are foreordained by God. On the other hand, it is not a doctrine of conditional decrees. The course of nature which God has decreed, and the large number of human actions He has predestined, are contingent upon nothing. Likewise the connections between all volitions and their consequences, including the relationships established in the decrees of election and reprobation, according to which faith and its opposite receive their due rewards, are of the most absolute nature. It might be said that, relative to the individual, the decrees of election and reprobation are conditional; but this is to speak loosely, for what is conditional is the applicability of the decrees to him, not whether, given a certain attitude on his part, the decreed consequences of that attitude will follow. In this connection it is important to

bear in mind the distinction between God's fundamental purpose and His decrees. As we have seen, the realization of that purpose is conditional, owing to its dependence upon man's use of his freedom, but the connections between faith and reward and persistent sin and punishment, established respectively in the decrees of election and reprobation, are absolute, and hold, whatever the conduct of the creature. The decree of election would hold, although all men should reject Christ, and similarly, that of reprobation would be unaffected, even though all should accept Him.

In our employment of the traditional terms, predestination, election, and reprobation, it is obvious that we are giving them a somewhat different content from that they carry in the deterministic system. These terms are not essential to the expression of our position, and it might be argued that it were better to omit them because of the deterministic associations. But the terms, we may reply, bear clear and definite meanings as they are used. Moreover, two of them, predestination and election, have the advantage of being Scriptural, and, as we have seen, are not necessarily used there in a thoroughgoing deterministic sense. On the whole, then, there is no reason for foregoing the use of terms to which the determinist cannot rightfully claim the exclusive title.

The position we have adopted will enable us to avoid those objections which are fatal to a doctrine of absolute, universal decrees. First of all, it enables us to free God from the authorship of sin. Sin is the result of free acts

of which God is not the efficient cause, and so far as His decrees are concerned, the good was as possible as the evil, and sin might not have come into existence at all. Thanks to this fact, we are not faced with the dilemma of regarding God as either wicked or impotent. The moral evil in the world comes, not by God's decree, but by His permission.

The question may of course be raised whether, although we are able to free God from the charge of direct complicity in sin, He ~~is~~not to be held guilty for the permission of ~~it~~. For to say that God permits sin only is not to free Him from the ultimate responsibility for its existence, seeing that He created the world with the existence of sin as a distinct possibility. If, as we shall try to show, God foresaw the sin He was to permit, His responsibility, it might be argued, is even as great as it is on the deterministic view. The question, then, ~~is~~not without its difficulty, but it must be emphasized that it is a question which confronts all theistic thinkers, and not merely those who attribute freedom to man. Now since God's ultimate responsibility for the existence of sin cannot be denied, we can meet the difficulty only by showing that He is justified in its permission. This the determinist is utterly unable to do. Even if ~~he~~ were able to show that, according to his tenets, God does not actually produce, but only permits, sin, he cannot show a sufficient reason for this permission. For, according to determinism, God might as easily as not have created man morally responsible, while at the same time decreeing that he should do no evil. To explain why He did not follow this manifestly wise

and good course the determinist is forced to choose between saying that He permitted sin out of His "mere good pleasure", which is to confess ignorance, and saying that He permitted it in order to glorify His justice, which is morally revolting. On the other hand, from the point of view of the theory we are supporting, God's permission of sin is perfectly intelligible and justifiable. God wanted man to have fellowship with Him, and to this end man must be morally responsible; but moral responsibility implies freedom, and freedom implies the possibility of sin. Here is the reasoning in a nutshell,- the achievement of God's purpose necessitated His creating man with the power of choosing the evil. This reasoning will hold even if God, in creating man, foresaw man's sin, and in fact is greatly strengthened if we grant this foresight, for we can be sure He would not have brought man into being, had He foreseen that His purpose with regard to him would not be realized. The divine foreknowledge enables us to say that God permits sin, not merely in the hope, but in the certainly of achieving His purpose.

A second advantage of the theory we have advanced lies in the fact that it does not represent God as arbitrarily electing certain individuals to salvation, while others are singled out for punishment. God wants all to be of the elect, and it is left to the individual to determine whether he will be or not. This freeing of God from the stigma of an arbitrary election and from the authorship of sin means that the theory we have presented is in harmony with belief in the perfection of God's character, and thus that it is to this

extent true to the criteria we have selected. It is also, as far as it goes, consistent with the reality of moral agency, for it attributes to man the power of contrary choice.

II. Limited Decrees and the Sovereignty of God

If, however, our doctrine of limited decrees, and of the conditional character of God's fundamental purpose, enables us to avoid some of the gravest objections to the deterministic point of view, it may yet be felt that we encounter an equally serious difficulty in connection with the sovereignty of God. For to the ~~determinist~~, giving up the thoroughgoing deterministic position is tantamount to denying divine sovereignty. We must, therefore, ask whether the position we have been taking is compatible with this great religious truth, which we have seen the necessity of preserving.

Let us proceed by examining the implications of our position for the conception of sovereignty in each of the three senses we have seen it to bear. First, then, the question arises whether we have been true to the fact of God's freedom in the bestowal of salvation. This will be more fully discussed later, when we are dealing with the doctrine of grace. It should be said here, however, that man's freedom to exercise faith is not, according to our theory, freedom to perform a meritorious act which obligates God. Faith is simply the acceptance of God's gift of salvation, and involves the acknowledgment of the individual's unworthi-

ness to receive it, as far as his own desert is concerned. When, upon the exercise of faith, God rewards the creature with His fellowship, He is simply doing what He has sovereignly predetermined to do upon such an occasion.

In the second place, let us consider the bearing of our theory on the conception of God's sovereignty in the sense of His control of the world for the realization of His purpose. Can God be sovereign in this sense if His decrees are limited, and His fundamental purpose conditional, or does the successful control of the world imply determinism? Now it would seem to be plain that controlling or directing is not universally synonymous with determining, and that under certain circumstances God might secure His desired end in the world without being the efficient cause of all that takes place. Determinism is not unambiguously implied by the idea of a divine providence which secures God's purpose in the world; and we shall contend that God's control is entirely consistent with the theory we have advocated, which ascribes to man a measure of freedom, and thus makes God's purpose in one sense conditional. But it must be emphasized that this consistency can be established only if we grant God the foreknowledge of contingent events. We have seen in our criticism of Edwards' argument from foreknowledge that there is no adequate ground for denying God's prescience of the future free acts of men, and that "the certain knowledge of the Almighty of what will be done freely, neither abridges the liberty of the agent, nor changes the contingency of the

event."¹ We saw, further, that to deny Him such foreknowledge is in fact to place Him in time. We must now insist upon the ascription of this power to God as essential if, on our theory, we are to uphold His omnipotence.

Perhaps we can best show the necessity of this position, and the way in which foreknowledge guarantees the success of God's fundamental purpose, by a criticism of the pluralistic theory, which ascribes freedom to man and at the same time denies God the foresight of man's free acts. According to the pluralist, and to certain theistic thinkers, such as George Galloway and Martineau, God, being unable to foresee contingent events, is aware only of the various possibilities which the future holds. This, however, is regarded by them as quite sufficient. The following quotation from Martineau gives a clear statement of the position: "Beyond this (i.e., the domain of physical nature), in the world of intelligences, a margin of freedom being allowed, the lines of possibility are not rectilinear, but divergent, and open a way into innumerable hypothetical fields, among which, as yet indivisible, lies the actual. In the outlook upon this realm which embraces the future, what is needed, in order that the intending causality of God, and His moral government, may secure their ends and shape their means? Simply that no one of the open possibilities should remain in the dark and pass unreckoned; and that they should all, in their working out, be compatible with the ruling purposes of God, not de-

¹W. A. Copinger, A Treatise on Predestination, Election, and Grace, p. 122.

feating the aim, but only varying the track. An infinite mind, with prevision thus extended beyond all that is to all that can be, is lifted above surprise or disappointment, and able to provide for all events and combinations." ²

Ward, in his Realm of Ends, refers approvingly to this passage as a sufficient reconciliation of pluralism with foreknowledge, a reconciliation he admits to be necessary.

Now the feature which makes this a thoroughly unsatisfactory position is that one of the possibilities is the frustration of God's basic purpose for man by man's misuse of his freedom. If man is free to choose the evil, we cannot then speak of the future possibilities as being all "compatible with the ruling purposes of God", only variations of the track toward their fulfilment. Galloway holds that there is no danger of the failure of God's purpose, owing to the fact that "the consequences of human volition in the world of existences are constantly conditioned by the wider activity of God." ³ "This constant conditioning activity of God", he goes on to say, "renders the ultimate frustration of the Divine Purpose impossible." ⁴ But as long as man is granted freedom of choice between the good and the evil, no amount of "conditioning activity" can obviate the fact that he may choose the evil. The frustration of God's purpose remains a possibility unless the "conditioning activity" is such that the real power of contrary choice between the good

²James Martineau, A Study of Religion, Vol. II, Bk.3, p.279.

³George Galloway, The Philosophy of Religion, p. 490.

⁴ibid, p. 490.

and the evil is taken away.

This is made very evident by an illustration used by William James, designed to show how a God, without foreknowledge of free acts, may yet be sure of reaching His objective. "Suppose", says James, "two men before a chessboard---the one a novice, the other an expert player of the game. The expert intends to beat. But he cannot foresee exactly what any one move of his adversary may be. He knows, however, all the possible moves of the latter; and he knows in advance how to meet each of them by a move of his own which leads in the direction of victory. And the victory infallibly arrives, after no matter how devious a course, in the one predestined form of check-mate to the novice's king." ⁵ The flaw in this analogy is that the game is won only when the novice's freedom to make further moves is taken from him. According to the analogy God will ultimately accomplish His purpose, if men persist in choosing wrongly, by progressively depriving them of their freedom, until they finally discover themselves to be "check-mated", all freedom being gone. That is to say, as long as the divine foresight of free acts is denied, we must either deny the power of contrary choice to man or the certainty of the fulfilment of the divine purpose.

F.C.S. Schiller, who, like James, rejects complete predestination and likewise divine foresight of contingent events, is more ready to accept the consequences. "Indeterminism", he says, "even when it has been tamed, i.e., limited, and ren-

⁵William James, *The Will to Believe and Other Essays in Popular Philosophy*, p. 181.

dered calculable and determinable, still means chance, and chance means risk, and risk the possibility of failure." ⁶ We need not agree that all types of indeterminism mean chance, but we can see that to attribute to man real freedom, and to deny God the foresight of his acts, is to jeopardize the realization of His purpose in the world, and thus to render His providential control uncertain. It is to rob us of full confidence in God's control of the world; and the simple fact that God, knowing all the future possibilities, knows thereby the possibility of His failure, does not restore that confidence. What the religious heart wants is the faith that somehow good will prevail, not simply the assurance that, should the day be won by the forces of evil, God would be "lifted above surprise or disappointment." The trusting soul wants to believe that such an outcome will certainly not take place, and nothing less than faith in a sovereign who offers this assurance will meet his needs.

Now, granting real freedom to the creature, such assurance can be given only by a sovereign whose knowledge is unlimited. With God possessing certain knowledge of the future, we can be sure that the outcome will be in accordance with His purpose, for we can be sure, as we have said above, that a wise and good God would not have created a world in which His purpose was subject even to possible defeat. God's wisdom and goodness, coupled with His prevision, are a sufficient guarantee of the fact that things will work out in such

⁶F. C. S. Schiller, *Studies in Humanism*, p. 418.

a way as to accomplish His aim, even though this is conditioned upon man's exercise of faith. No "conditioning activity" of God is necessary to render inevitable the victory of His purpose. Man is free to choose between real alternatives, free to choose evil if he wills, but nevertheless it is certain that God will emerge the conqueror. The fulfilment of His purpose is conditional in the sense that its accomplishment depends on the free choices of man, but it is not conditional in the sense that its achievement is uncertain. That it will be secured is as certain as determinism can make it, yet the certainty is not bought at the prohibitive price determinism must pay for it.

A word of explanation should be added regarding our meaning in saying that God's purpose will be realized. We do not, of course, mean that all His purposes with regard to each individual will come to pass. We cannot accept the deterministic theory of providence, according to which all things, both good and evil, come about through God's will. The existence of sin is a frustration of some of His purposes; nor is this a fact to be reluctantly admitted, but rather a precious truth to those who are jealous of God's character. What we ~~do~~ mean is that God's fundamental purpose will be realized; God will have creatures for fellowship with Himself. His purpose from the standpoint of the race as a whole will be achieved. To discuss the question of how many individuals would have to be saved for this purpose to be fulfilled would manifestly be absurd. And it is of course beyond us to suggest what proportion of men actually will at-

tain the goal of perfect fellowship with God. It is entirely possible that there will ultimately be a universal salvation, but we cannot go further than to suggest the possibility of this. What we can say is that a sufficient number of individuals will attain to fellowship with God to make the cost in moral and spiritual tragedy worthwhile. And if we can say this with certainty, then we can say that the world is providentially ordered, that God is indeed in control, and His sovereign purpose even now being brought to pass.

Let us now examine the bearing of our position on the ascription of omnipotence to God. We have seen that there is no conflict between our theory and the conception of sovereignty in the sense of God's freedom in salvation, or as meaning that God's control of the world guarantees the realization of His purpose. If the fact that God's decrees are limited, and His fundamental purpose conditional, is also in harmony with our regarding Him as omnipotent, it will follow that the theory we have advanced upholds the doctrine of sovereignty.

To proceed, then, we cannot deduce from the notion of an omnipotent God the conclusion that He must be the efficient cause of everything. There is no reason why omnipotence would no longer be omnipotence, if it voluntarily delegated to finite spirits the power of causation in a limited sphere. Omnipotence implies simply that there is nothing extrinsic to God which forces from Him this delegation of the power of contrary choice or trammels His will in any way. And it has

been forcefully argued that it would be a more serious limitation upon His sovereignty to deny Him the power of creating free finite spirits than to ascribe it to Him. The fact that God has voluntarily/delegated freedom to man implies also that He has voluntarily made the accomplishment of His fundamental purpose conditional. Its conditional character, therefore, implies no limitation in Him, and is in keeping with His attribute of omnipotence.

But here again we must insist upon God's foreknowledge of contingent events as essential, for to deny it, while attributing freedom to the creature, would be to limit the divine power. We have said that the delegation of freedom to man is not inconsistent with God's omnipotence, so long as it is voluntary. By a parallel line of reasoning it might seem that to give up His foreknowledge of those acts whose foredetermination He has relinquished would be compatible with His omniscience, and certainly no limitation upon His power. This would indeed be true but for the fact that the limitation of His foreknowledge could not be voluntary. Martineau speaks of it as a "self-limitation", but this language is misleading. God limits His power voluntarily when He endows the creature with freedom; but there is no reason for a voluntary limitation of His knowledge. If we grant freedom to the creature, and on this ground deny God the foreknowledge of his free acts, the only reason for this limitation is the position taken by Edwards, that God is under the necessity of knowing future events by inference, that is to say, that God is in time. Now if God's knowledge

is limited for this reason, it is not a voluntary limitation, but a necessary limitation imposed upon God by factors extrinsic to Himself. God, so the reasoning goes, in order to delegate freedom to the creature, is forced to surrender foreknowledge of the creature's free acts. This is expressly to deny His omnipotence, and thereby to forfeit the truth of His sovereignty. It is to substitute for the infinite and transcendent God of theism, for whom Barth is rightly contending today, the finite God of pluralism. Thus if, on our theory, which acknowledges freedom to the creature, we are to maintain the sovereignty of God, we must be prepared to grant Him foreknowledge of contingent events.

It might be added that, even on the deterministic theory, the possibility of God's knowing the future directly, and not on the basis of His decrees, must be granted if He is to be thought of as an infinite and transcendent being. For even if God determines all events, He is yet, on the theory that He knows the future only by inference, in time, and therefore not the God of theism. In fact it would even seem to follow from a position like that of Edwards', that God does not determine all things, and is therefore not omnipotent, since the necessity of His inferring the future must be due to external factors.

CHAPTER XIII

THE FREEDOM OF MAN

We come now to the problem of the will, our task being to develop a theory which will accord with the conditions of genuine moral agency. We have already made considerable progress toward this goal in the discovery that determinism in any form is untenable, on the ground of its denial of alternative choice. On the other hand, Edwards has revealed to us, through his criticism of Arminianism, the impossibility of a libertarian theory. Our cardinal problem will be to defend the attribution to man of a power of contrary choice without falling into the libertarian position.

I. The Error in the Method of Determinism

Perhaps the best approach to a true theory will be to ask ourselves where the determinist has missed the way. What is the error which has led him into his untenable position? To answer summarily, it is the fact that he begins his study with an initial supposition which precludes an impartial investigation. He approaches the study of volition with the assumption that in all its manifestations it can be completely explained by the methods of empirical science. All volition, that is to say, is an empirical phenomenon, and as

such is simply a case of the operation of the causal law as science states it,- the law that every event must have a preceding cause, and that a cause can produce only one effect. Volition, it is assumed, can be analyzed, and its component parts exhibited as links in a causal chain. The question whether there may be a subjective, or noumenal, factor in volition,- a factor which resists empirical analysis,- is not raised. Ward has clearly stated the nature of the deterministic procedure. "In the first place, determinism and sensationalism alike, in common with all naturalistic thinking, set out from the objective standpoint, as if it were absolute. The subjective factor in all experience, which the natural/sciences can safely ignore, can, they assume, be ignored by the moral and historical sciences too."¹ The determinist never gets back of this initial assumption. Instead of asking, first of all, What is here? he begins with the certainty that, whatever it is, its nature is amenable to analysis.

It is evident that such a procedure amounts to a pre-judgment of the case. If all volition can be accounted for by the method of empirical science, then the determinist is committed to his deterministic conclusion by his initial assumption. He will see only those elements in the willing process which can be empirically cognized. The very existence of other non-phenomenal, subjective elements is denied without investigation, by this assumption. The study of volition

¹James Ward, The Realm of Ends, p. 290.

for him becomes simply the analysis of the process in terms of the law, 'like cause like effect'. His task is simply to exhibit the act as determined by the strongest motive, which in turn is caused by the agent's character in its relation to the environment.

This fallacy in the deterministic approach has been somewhat differently expressed by Bergson by means of the distinction between the abstract, spatialized conception of time used by science, and real duration. To picture volition as a purely phenomenal event and seek completely to analyze it is to abstract it from the real duration in which it actually takes place, and represent it as taking place in the homogeneous medium, which is the scientific symbol of time. Volition represented in this fashion is a static thing, consisting of parts external to one another. This is indeed the way volition appears in retrospect, but its living, dynamic nature is experienced only in the present. To represent the willing process in spatialized time, to view it in retrospect, is, inevitably, to regard it as determined. To quote Bergson: "For we can analyze a thing, but not a process; we can break up extensity, but not duration. Or, if we persist in analyzing it, we unconsciously transform the process into a thing and duration into extensity. By the very fact of breaking up concrete time we set out its moments in homogeneous space; in place of the doing we put the already done; and, as we have begun by, so to speak, stereotyping the activity of the self, we see spontaneity settle down into inertia and freedom into necessity." ²

²Henri Bergson, *Time and Free Will*,
pp 219-220.

Thus the initial assumption of the determinist is such that he is excluded from facing the real question at issue between him and the proponent of genuine freedom. He is concerned solely with applying a method which inevitably involves determinism, without first having asked whether that method is applicable to the case in point. His conclusion is invulnerable if we do not question his assumption, and indeed the plausibility of his position rests upon a tacit acceptance of his fundamental presupposition. The more unconscious that acceptance is, the more logical and inevitable appears the deterministic scheme. Indeed the failure to become aware of it is the chief reason why so many thinkers find themselves faced with the dilemma of choosing between determinism and chance.

II. The Nature of Free Volitions

Our criticism of the determinist's procedure should warn us against the assumption which defeats him in his search for the truth. In order further to free ourselves from presuppositions, let us forget temporarily, as far as possible, the ethical and theological demands which we have recognized to lie upon us in framing a theory of volition. If we leave out of account, for the time being, all thought of its moral and religious bearings, we may be able to approach the development of a theory of volition from a standpoint which is relatively independent of the major considerations of this thesis.

In this objective spirit, let us interrogate our voli-

tional experience in an effort to discover what we can of its nature. We are to ask simply what it is that takes place in the willing process. This will necessarily mean that we are to look at volition, as far as possible, in its actual process, and not as it appears after it is past, since only thus can we observe its real/nature.

The testimony of our consciousness of our conative experience seems to make the answer to our question plain beyond the possibility of error. Volition at least sometimes involves a selection between open possibilities. That is to say, we are sometimes conscious of choosing one alternative, when one or more other alternatives are equally within our power to choose. We feel that some of our volitions consist not merely in the willing of a certain thing, but in the choosing of it, in the full sense of the term. It is implicit in these volitions that, if we had wished, we might have acted otherwise than we did, and we therefore feel ourselves responsible for our actions, and praise or condemn ourselves for them.

This consciousness of alternative choice is our primary experience. When we scrutinize it further, it becomes apparent that there are two chief implications of the experience, namely, that the volition is free, and that it is purposive. Let us examine these implications in turn. First, then, when we say that a volition is free, we mean that the self originates it spontaneously, that the self's efficiency lies within itself and is not communicated ab extra, that in willing it is independent of any previous cause, whether efficient

or final. Now this is involved in the fact of alternative choice. If the self is not a cause to which the description, 'like cause like effect', applies, but one which can produce different effects, then the self is obviously not determined to produce either one or the other. We cannot choose one alternative rather than the other unless we are free to do so, that is to say, independent of everything antecedent which might either prevent, or force, our choosing one alternative. And for the self to be thus independent of preceding causes is for it to be a spontaneous, creative cause in its own right. Thus we affirm on other grounds the existence of that freedom we have seen to be implied by our consciousness of moral responsibility.

This is not to say that our free volitions are uncaused events. Ward is right in saying that the admission that a volition is in some sense caused "can only be disputed by one who is prepared to allow a positive reality to absolute chance, and to regard praise and blame as entirely meaningless and out of place."³ Spontaneous causation is not causelessness. And when the applicability to our free volitions of the principle of causality, as science formulates it, is denied, it is not meant to deny the principle itself, namely, that every event has a cause. The self in its free volitions is the spontaneous cause of its own activity. We may go even further and say that a free cause, such as we have asserted the self to be, is the only true cause.

³James Ward, *The Realm of Ends*, p. 273.

For the only true cause is "that which determines an alternative",⁴ and thus initiates its own activity. The so-called "second causes" of the natural world are not causes in the primary sense of the term.

In asserting that some of our volitions are free in the sense described, we do not wish to be understood as implying that this is true of all volitions. On the contrary, no advocate of freedom should be unwilling to admit that, as we have already recognized, the majority of our volitions are determined. Most of our acts are performed as the result of instinct, habit, etc. Many more of them are determined by virtue of the fact that our character, in relation to the circumstances, excludes the rise of alternatives. What we are concerned to insist upon is only the fact that some of our volitions, those which are morally the most serious, are free.

Before we pass on to consider the purposive character of our free volitions, it is well to point out that causation, such as we have held the self to possess, does not belong to the phenomenal realm. All phenomenal causes are the effects of antecedent causes, and they are all subject to the rule, 'like cause like effect'. The realm of empirical science and natural causes knows nothing of spontaneity. The agent, however, in his really free acts, initiating his own choices, is a non-empirical being, lying deeper than the phenomenal realm. His free volitions are thus not suscepti-

⁴James Martineau, A Study of Religion, p. 241.

ble to the methods and explanations employed in regard to empirical events. His causation is of the kind that the deterministic method overlooks, and to which it does not apply.

The second implication of the consciousness of choosing between genuine alternatives is that the choice is a purposive one. Choice, in its very nature, is an act in which selective, purposive activity is brought into play. We have a reason for choosing the alternative we do choose,- we have a purpose or end in view. The purpose, or end, answers the question why the act takes place by giving a reason for it. It is that aspect of the volition which characterizes it as the act of a rational, intelligent being. Purposiveness implies a mind. On the other hand, to say that the purpose of the act is the reason for its taking place is not to say that it is the cause of its taking place. If the question is asked what causes the act, the answer is that the agent does. The purposiveness of the act furnishes an intellectual vindication of it, but does not completely account for it, either as efficient or final cause.

There is no reason for objecting to the purpose's being spoken of as the motive, provided this term be stripped of its/deterministic connotations. Even in the mildest forms of self-determination the motive is determinative of the volition, and this is unacceptable. If we bear in mind, however, that a motive is not an impulse, but a reason,- and a none-determining one,- there is no ground for discarding the term. It must of course be understood that this is not to adopt the position taken by Martineau and others to the effect

that we choose our motives,- this would be to fall back into libertarianism. We neither are determined by, nor do we choose, our motive, but in our free volitions, we have a motive, that is, a purpose. This purpose or motive is a part of the volition itself, and not to be abstracted from it and made either its antecedent cause or the object of its choice.

If our free volitions are purposive, they are, for this reason, utterly different from the spontaneous acts of will postulated by the libertarians, against which Edwards so manfully strove. As we have seen, such acts are dissociated from both the agent's character and his intellect, being merely events without meaning and without aim. On this ground libertarianism is inadequate both psychologically, as an account of volition, and ethically, as providing a basis of moral agency. The view we have advanced conserves the spontaneity of libertarianism and also the purposiveness of determinism. It will follow from the fact that free volitions are not mere aimless happenings, but rational choices, that they cannot be predicated of a will in abstraction from the intellect, nor, as we shall see later, from the character. In fact they cannot be predicated of any one part of the self, nor even of all the parts taken together, but flow from the self as a whole. Volition is the self's willing, and freedom belongs to the self, not to any part of it.

This view is in harmony with the best modern psychological thought, which sees the self, not as an aggregate, but as a unity, in which certain elements can be distinguished,

but from which they cannot be separated. The self, on this view, cannot be reduced without remainder to the various elements distinguishable within it, but is more than the sum of its parts. Further, the parts within it have their nature and mode of operation moulded by the whole. "We must recognize that the self which is the origin of the action, and in which we distinguish both the idea of goodness and the desire for an object inconsistent with the good, is the real cause of the action and exercises a real choice. It is the nature of the self to act and thus, in certain circumstances, to choose or select between possible alternatives. This is neither a freak of unmotivated willing nor an irruption of a pure ego into the realm of time. It is simply the real choice of a real self,- a self which is not merely a diversity of tendencies and qualities, but a unity of that diversity." ⁵

This being the nature of the self, it manifestly lies at least partially below the level of the phenomenal realm in which complete analysis is possible. As we should expect, there is a noumenal self, which originates those volitions we have seen to belong to the noumenal realm. But to recognize this is to have notice served upon us that such volitions cannot be exhaustively analyzed and explained. We cannot explain spontaneous causation, because explaining it means accounting for it in terms of transeunt causation, and thus denying spontaneity. Nor can we explain just how a volition can be both spon-

⁵W. R. Sorley, *Moral Values and The Idea of God*, p. 436.

taneous and purposive without denying the fact. For explanation means distinguishing the purpose, or motive, and the act of volition proper, and relating these causally. But if we relate them as the libertarian does and say that the volition chooses the motive, we then deny the purposiveness of the volition. If, on the other hand, we relate them as the determinist does, and say the motive determines the volition, we deny spontaneity to the volition. We are thus forced to recognize that the conative process cannot be artificially split into a motive and an act of volition proper, but resists this sort of empirical analysis. We can say then that a free volition is a spontaneous act and that it possesses a motive, or purpose. This much we know, and it is sufficient. Further than this we cannot go, nor do we feel the need of going further. Recognizing the noumenal character of ^{free}volitions, we are free to acknowledge the fact that a spontaneous, purposive choice is a unique, concrete event, of which we can know something, but whose nature we cannot exhaustively understand. We are conscious of being in the presence of something which transcends the full grasp of conceptual thought. Choice is choice, and here we must stop.

That this admission of our ignorance of the ultimate nature of free volitions is a valid and necessary position, and not just a confession of failure, should be granted by all who appreciate the distinction between the metaphysical, or noumenal, and the phenomenal realm, and the respective methods applicable within them. The impossibility of rendering in conceptual thought the complete process involved in a

free volition is widely recognized. In this connection let us note the opinions of a theologian, a philosopher, and a psychologist in turn. "This fallacy of applying an intellectual test to an act of the moral will", says W. A. Copinger, "is apparent throughout the Necessarian scheme. It is difficult, if not impossible, truly to express the higher forms of spiritual truth in words applicable to the action or mode of operation in natural things. Language itself is constituted on an intellectual or logical, not a spiritual basis, and if the mystery of the action of freewill could be set forth and made plain in terms capable of being comprehended by the understanding, it could no longer be properly termed a mystery."⁶ The same idea is expressed by Professor Herbert W. Carr, when he says that "the very terms in which alone we can give outward expression to what we know as inner intuition contradict the affirmation, even in affirming it."⁷ Again, let us note the striking testimony given from the point of view of the psychologist by Professor William McDougall: "Now a purposive action, when considered in isolation, is strictly speaking unintelligible; it has not the intelligibility of an isolated mechanical event, such as the impact of one billiard ball upon another. It is for this very reason that it is so hard to persuade many psychologists that even human activities are truly purposive. They cannot see through and comprehend the isolated purposive act from

⁶W. A. Copinger, A Treatise on Predestination, Election, and Grace, p. 279.

⁷Herbert W. Carr, The Free Will Problem, p. 78.

beginning to end. That difficulty I admit. I insist upon it. But I do not for that reason resort to the absurdity of denying the obvious facts. There is nothing more obstructive to the advance of knowledge than a certain unformulated dogma implicitly accepted by many men of science, namely, the dogma that what we cannot fully understand cannot happen. We cannot too strongly insist that the bounds of the possible do not coincide with and are not set by the limits of our present powers of comprehension."⁸

In the light of the distinction between the noumenal and the phenomenal spheres, and the consequent inapplicability of the analytical method to the free volitions which lie in the former, we can see the answer to the major deterministic criticism of the position we are advocating. For the determinist, a purposive act must be a determined act. The reason is clear: a purposive act involves a motive, and whether this motive be an efficient or a final cause, it is determinative of the volition. To deny the determining character of the purpose, or motive, is to deny purposiveness altogether, and to fall back into libertarianism. There can thus be no middle ground between the Arminian doctrine of free will and determinism.

Now this criticism proceeds under the conviction that our conative activity can be analyzed in such a way as to enable us to explain the exact relationship between the pur-

⁸William McDougall, Religion and the Sciences of Life, in The South Atlantic Quarterly, January 1932, pp 24-25.

pose, or motive, and the act of the will, or volition proper. To explain the relationship is to express it in terms of the law of cause and effect, as that law is formulated for the empirical world. Accordingly the volition is said to be determined by the motive, as its antecedent cause, with the result that the volition loses its spontaneity. But this entire procedure involves the assumption that conations belong wholly to the phenomenal realm, that an act which takes place in "the flow of concrete duration" can be described in terms of spatialized time. To point this out, then, is a sufficient answer to the criticism,- it proceeds upon an assumption, and according to a method our investigation has already shown to be false.

The picture of choice given us by the determinist is itself a testimony to the fact that its real nature flows through the meshes of the empirical net. What we have, even in the "softest" determinism, is simply a causal chain, differing in no respect from a causal series in the natural world, as Edwards himself recognized, except in the nature of the elements related. To exhibit this as an account of free volition is to caricature the reality. The inner nature of choice eludes the searchlight of empirical analysis just as life eludes discovery by the surgeon's knife. Like Buddha's chariot, choice for the determinist is merely an aggregate of parts. And just as there is, in reality, for Buddha, no chariot, so for the determinist there is in reality no choice. But Buddha realized there was no chariot, while the determinist does not realize that, on the basis of

his presupposition, there is no choice; and he therefore persists in applying the term to a causal series which denies the existence of open possibilities.

It is worth calling attention at this point to the significant fact that the initial error of the libertarian is identical with that of his deterministic opponent. His position is vitiated by the fact that he does not detect and repudiate the method of empirical analysis used by the determinist. If he is aware of the assumption on which the determinist proceeds, he does not make it known, or at least, he does not reject it. On the contrary he accepts its validity and actually utilizes some of its results in building up his own theory of freedom. The determinist analyzes volition and finds it to consist in the determination of a power of activity he calls the will by a foregoing motive, which in turn has sprung from the agent's character. The indeterminist accepts this as being a complete analysis of what is involved. This is his initial and fundamental error. He fails to perceive that, in the deterministic account, the self is entirely omitted, and the possibility of a noumenal factor in volition ruled out,- that what is given us as a picture of the volitional process is merely its skeleton. But having gone the length of accepting the determinist's analysis, and thus having on his hands an unbroken causal series, the libertarian finds himself on the highroad to determinism, and must cast about for some way of escape. This escape he makes by endowing the will with the whole power of choice, independent of character and motive. The result is

his doctrine of the "liberty of indifference".

Now in doing this, the libertarian resorts to the only alternative left the proponent of freedom, who does not disavow the deterministic procedure at the very outset. He must introduce spontaneity somewhere. He cannot introduce it into the relation between character and circumstance, which gives rise to the motive. The only thing he can do is to break the chain of transeunt causation after the motive has arisen, and denying that this motive determines the act of the will, predicate spontaneity of the abstract faculty of will itself. We have already seen how unsatisfactory this theory is in itself, not to speak of the disadvantage at which this compromise attitude places the libertarian in his argument with determinism.

Before moving on to a discussion of the relation of character to free volitions, it may be well to advert to a position taken by Bergson, whom we have quoted approvingly above, which constitutes a criticism of the view we have upheld. While the determinist insists upon a complete elucidation of volition, Bergson insists with equal vigor upon the impossibility of saying anything about the nature of choice. The defenders of freedom, he argues, follow the same procedure as the determinist when they define a free act as a selection between equally possible alternatives. For this involves the representation of the self as oscillating between two diverging lines of action, a representation which spatializes the conception of the willing process, and leads the proponent of freedom to take up his position

after the act. Now this, he insists, issues in absolute determinism. For since we can symbolize with our geometrical figure of the diverging lines only time which has passed, once the lines have been traced, one of them has been chosen, and the activity of the self is seen to have been tending all along in one direction. Bergson goes on to say that in truth such a symbolizing of volition is perfectly meaningless, since, seeing we cannot speak of a line of action until after the action has been performed, there can be no question of possible lines of action before the choice has taken place.

Now this is a misrepresentation of what the proponent of freedom does. It may be, and is probably true that the alternatives implied in choice are pictured as Bergson says, and that the symbolism is clumsy. But the real choice is not symbolized. The nature of the process by which selection is made we have recognized to transcend our grasp. The determinist, with his sequence of character, motive, and volition, does endeavor to give a complete analysis, in spatial terms, of volition, but this is precisely what we have recognized to be impossible.

Bergson's error is his failure to distinguish between a definition of free choice and an exhaustive explanation of its nature. To give some idea of what a free choice is, and to give a complete account of its nature and how it takes place, are vastly different things. It is entirely possible for a process such as willing to defy exhaustive analysis, and yet reveal something of its nature, and be to that extent

susceptible of definition. If freedom means anything, we must be able to give some expression to its meaning. And when we ask what it means, the essential thing about it is that it is the capacity for free and purposive selection between alternatives. Unless this much can be said of freedom, it is indistinguishable from determinism.

Bergson's refusal to give this much definition has vitiated his own positive treatment of the subject, leading him to attenuate the meaning of freedom until it is worthless. We are free, he says, "when our acts spring from our whole personality, when they express it, when they have that indefinable resemblance to it which one sometimes finds between the artist and his work."⁹ Freedom must be looked for, he continues, "in a certain characteristic of the decision which is taken, in the free act itself."¹⁰ Again, "Freedom is the relation of the concrete self to the act it performs."¹¹ These statements about freedom,- and so far as they go, they are really definitions, - indicate what an attenuated, nondescript thing it is in Bergson's own thought. As they stand, no determinist could possibly object to any of these statements as ~~a~~descriptive of volition. And the root of the difficulty is Bergson's refusal to define freedom ~~as~~ the choice between alternative lines of action. If there is a real distinction between freedom and determinism, that distinction must at least be expressible, or the whole discussion is stultified.

⁹Henri Bergson, *Time and Free Will*, p. 172.

¹⁰ibid, p. 173.

¹¹ibid, p. 219.

III. The Relation of Free Volitions and Character

For the sake of clarity we have reserved to this point the discussion of a problem which has important bearings on any theory of the will, namely, the question of the relation between volitions and character. We are concerned primarily with the part played by our character, or nature, in our free volitions, and conversely, with their effect upon it.

First of all, however, it should be made clear what is the relation to the self of the set of tendencies we call our character. Is, or is not, our nature capable of being isolated from the self? The answer is that it is no more to be abstracted from the self which owns it than the will and the act of willing from the agent who wills. The attempt to do this has been one of the egregious errors of determinism. As Professor Ward has well put it: "The efficiency and initiative that the indeterminist seems to find in the man apart from his character the determinist professes to find in the character apart from the man."¹² The self includes its character, or nature,- it is not extrinsically related to it. "Character, apart from the self which owns it, is an abstraction."¹³ It is of vital importance that this truth be kept in mind as we discuss the part played by character in volition. To ignore it is to expose ourselves to the fallacy of thinking of the character as influencing the self in willing ab extra, after the analogy of physical forces, or of leaving the self out altogether.

¹²James Ward, *The Realm of Ends*, pp 287-288.

¹³George Galloway, *The Philosophy of Religion*, p. 536.

One form of this error against which we are warning is an identification of the self with the character. Once the character has been abstracted from the self, volition becomes a mere causal connection between character, motive, and will, with the result that the self is left out entirely. To avoid the crassly mechanistic nature of this depersonalized theory, and do at least a verbal honor to the self, it is identified, as by T. H. Green, with the character. The self is then said to determine its own actions. But it is a self, a rational ego, only in name; in reality the self is reduced to the tendencies which it possesses. If we would reserve for the self its proper place in volition, and think clearly about the relation of character and volition, we must remember that just as it is the self which wills, so it is the self which owns and exercises those tendencies we call its character.

To return now to the question before us, let us note first the part played by character in our free volitions. This can be expressed in the statement that character conditions choice. There are two ways in which this conditioning activity operates. In the first place, character conditions free volitions by making them possible. There would be no freedom, but for the fact that we are sometimes faced by genuine alternatives. But the existence of alternatives is due to our character, in which there are conflicting elements. These set up a tension within the self, in the form of competing tendencies or desires, each of which points toward some action, which, if the situation permits, becomes an open

possibility for the self. Now in a person whose character was completely formed, i.e., in whom no diverse tendencies existed, there could be no alternatives in conduct. To a perfect knowledge and will there would be no alternative to the best, while to a perfectly evil character there would likewise be no alternative to the bad. It ~~is~~ thanks to our character, which, in regard to some things, is only partially formed, that we are ever confronted with alternatives at all. The very existence of freedom is dependent upon character.

To take the position that to a perfect knowledge and will there would be no alternative to the best, is to admit that God's volitions are determined. The question will naturally arise,- and let us pause here to notice it,- whether this ~~is~~ not to commit the fallacy of the infinite regress. This fallacy, however, applies only to that theological system in which transeunt causation is exalted as a universal principle. In such a system, not only God's volitions, but God's very existence must be accounted for by an antecedent cause. Where spontaneity is admitted, however, we are at liberty to stop with God, and look upon Him as first cause and self-existent. We need not attribute His existence to anything beyond Himself, although the explanation of His existence of course transcends our capacities. God's existence is of course a unique factor and we do not intend to suggest that it is of the same order as a spontaneous volition. What we can insist upon is that the admission of spontaneity, and the consequent denial of universal, sequent causation, frees us ~~from~~ any logical necessity of

assuming that God's existence requires a previous cause,- as Edwards, consistently, is bound to assume. Now given God's existence as an eternal perfect Being, it will follow that there has never been an evil alternative confronting Him. Thus God's volitions are determined, a fact which we need not hesitate to recognize. We may nevertheless hold God responsible for His volitions, inasmuch as, being the First Cause, He must be regarded as responsible for the character which gives rise to His volitions.

As we were saying, character conditions our free volitions by making freedom possible. The second way in which its conditioning activity operates is by limiting the alternatives open to us. The self's volition must consist in the choice of one of the alternatives occasioned by the tendencies within its character. We never choose anything for which there is no inner tendency,- such a thing never becomes a possibility for us. There may at any time be conceivable alternatives other than those which are real for us, but these are definitely blocked out by our character. In this sense freedom of choice is limited. We are never free to choose "anything under the sun", but find the range of our choices definitely determined by the nature we have inherited and developed.

In speaking of the influence of character in determining the alternatives before us, it is not meant to exclude the part played by environment. (The term is used here in its broadest possible sense, as referring to everything outside the self, including objectively apprehended values.)

The environment limits the possible alternatives before us at any given time, before the character further limits them. This limitation by the environment consists first of all in a restriction of our "natural ability". In any particular situation certain things are physically impossible. But also, within the range of the physically possible acts at any given time, the environment plays a further part in the final determination of the alternatives. A certain possible act can be made, by its environmental setting, more appealing at one time than at another. For instance, the strength of the temptation in the thief to steal will vary in proportion to the danger involved. The environment may, in fact, determine on the objective side very largely the capacity of a physically possible act to appeal to our desire on the subjective side. Circumstances alter cases, and hence an act for which we have the natural ability may in a certain situation become an alternative of choice, while in another situation it may have so weak an appeal to us as even to fail of becoming "morally possible". This effect of environmental factors upon the appeal to us of physically possible acts is what we mean by the term, influence. By way of recapitulation, we may say then that the conceivable alternatives in any given situation are limited in three ways: (1) by the environment, in limiting what is possible from the standpoint of our natural ability, (2) by the environment, in influencing the appeal certain physically possible acts make, and (3) by the character, in determining finally which of these acts shall become genuine alternatives. It is thus correct to say

that the alternatives before us are limited by our character in relation to the environment. But in the process character is the more fundamental and important.

When the alternatives in any given situation are finally established, our freedom to choose any one of them is complete. Even though the tendency toward one alternative is "stronger" than to another, with the result that the former is easier to choose than the latter, the self yet has the power to choose either. We cannot, of course, properly apply physical conceptions to the tendencies within the self, and do not mean by speaking of one as "stronger" than another to imply that they are analogous to physical forces directed upon the self. As we have seen, the self owns its character, and its divergent tendencies issue from it. However, in case of a conflict between two desires, one may be more intense, with the result that the tendency toward the act which will satisfy it is in a sense "stronger" than the competing tendency. In the case of tension between a natural desire and the tendency to the right, physical/analogies are totally misleading, there being no common measure to estimate the weight of such a desire against a tendency involving a judgment of worth. The point to be insisted upon here, however, is that, whatever may or may not be said about the strength, intensity, or worth of a tendency, the self is at liberty, once this tendency has established a certain volition as "morally" possible, to exert the volition.

This account of the relation of character to free volitions makes it clear that in any choice character is ex-

pressed. The element in our character giving rise to the alternative chosen, while not determining the choice, is nevertheless bodied forth in the act. Its nature is expressed by the whole self, which, after deliberation, with purpose and intention, freely elects to identify itself with the tendency giving rise to the alternative chosen. Any free choice expresses not only something of the self's character as built up in the past, but also what the self is in the moment of willing,- what use the active self makes of its freedom.

Having seen the part which character plays in volition, we may now briefly point out that the relationship is reciprocal. It is a matter of common experience that volitions affect character, modifying it in every instance. That element of character expressed in any volition is thereby strengthened, and those elements left unexpressed are weakened. So generally is this recognized that we need not labor the point. Such modification of our nature by our conduct is not only a matter of common experience, but it is essential if either moral development or degeneration is to be possible. Granted this modification, both development and degeneration are accounted for. Either the better or worse elements of character are strengthened, and the individual grows in the direction of moral perfection or degenerates in the direction of complete corruption.

This alteration in character implies that it is possible for the areas of free and determined acts to shift. An act which, at one time and in a given environment, is free,

may become at another time and in the same environment, determined, and vice versa, (assuming for the sake of argument that a situation can be exactly duplicated). A free act may become determined by virtue of the fact that the element in our nature expressed in it may become, through our conduct, so strong in relation to the competing tendency that the latter is entirely lost, and ceases to give rise to an open possibility for our conduct. It is more difficult to see how an act, at one time determined, may in a like situation become free. The very fact that it is determined rules out the possibility of our directly willing the existence of a genuine alternative to it. Nevertheless, within the realm of our freedom, we may, by our conduct, so strengthen the general tendency in the opposite direction, that when the situation again arises, there will be an alternative to the formerly determined act. For instance, - to use the time-worn illustration of the drunkard who is offered a drink in a public house, - it may at one time be impossible for him to decline, but after taking the drink on this occasion, he may set about a general moral reform and strengthening of his self-control, with the result that, a year later, when he is offered the drink, his declination may be a real possibility. It is thus open to us, morally speaking, to develop either side of our nature. Our ideal, in the light of this possibility, is to become perfectly good, so that evil acts are no longer "morally" possible to us. This is the ideal which we find actualized in the character of God.

The development of the good character is well described

by Professor W. R. Sorley: "Man is thrown into the midst of competing interests and values or apparent values, and he is left to make his own choice among them....No causal necessity compels him to take the way he ought to take. But, if he does so choose, and if he accustom himself to will the higher values in spite of the attractions of other interests, then he achieves in this process a higher value than any other - that of the good will of a free man.

"When, if ever, this character is firmly established, the need for repeated conflict in order that the good may be chosen disappears; the warring elements in his nature are brought into order, the hostile forces into subjection, and the good will ceases to display the struggle between higher and lower principles with which we are familiar. Goodness achieved through freedom, if completely realised, would exhibit to the observer a uniformity similar to that of the necessarily connected processes of nature; but the principle of action would remain different. It would be external in the one case and internal in the other. The free man may achieve uniformity through his freedom; upon the unfree man it would have to be imposed."¹⁴

Having now set forth the relationship between character and choice, we have completed a theory of volition which seems to meet all the demands that can be made in the name of moral agency. We have seen that man is capable of genuinely free volitions, in which he exercises the power of

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W. R. Sorley, *Moral Values and The Idea of God*, pp 444-445.

contrary choice. We have seen that these choices are also purposive, and that they proceed from the self as a whole, so that the self is granted its important role in conative activity. And finally, we have recognized the place of character in the volitional process, and indicated the manner in which it influences, and in turn is influenced by, our acts of choice .

Not only does this theory establish a basis of moral responsibility, but it accounts for the plausibility of the deterministic position. That element in the agent's character which is expressed in an act of free choice exists before the act, and thus, in retrospect, the connection between the character and the volition may be construed as a causal one. The simple fact that there is a sequence makes it easy to identify the antecedent tendency of character as the efficient cause of the act. As William James points out, an act, after it has taken place, even if it be held to be due to chance, will appear as well connected with the past as if it were determined. Bergson has also shown that all acts looked at after their occurrence must appear determined, this being true because the retrospective view necessarily omits the real choice, which, as we have seen, can be experienced only in the moment of choice. Now determinism, in view of its fundamental assumption, gives an account of volition after it is passed, the causal connection being taken for granted, and the real choice being ignored. Hence the apparent success with which it applies the objective, analytic method of empirical science to the exposition of volition.

We are able to see also, in the light of what has been said about the relation of character to volition, why it is possible for prediction of conduct to be brought to such a high degree of accuracy. The simple fact that the majority of our acts are determined will explain this in large measure. The further fact that the alternatives are very definitely limited by the agent's character will account for a comparatively high degree of accuracy even in regard to free acts. The possibility of prediction in the case of a large number of human acts cannot therefore be urged as a proof of the deterministic position. But a further consideration is relevant. The determinist accounts for his mistakes in prediction on the ground of his ignorance of the character and circumstances of the individual. Undoubtedly this is a satisfactory explanation in many cases, but there are also those cases in which a person, whose character is well known, acts in a manner contradictory to the prevailing temper of that character as we know it. In such cases the determinist is faced with the dilemma of acknowledging that he was completely mistaken in his appraisal of the individual, an acknowledgment which by definition is ruled out, or of admitting that the act was determined by the "weaker" element in the agent's character, which is not determinism. Such cases can therefore not be accounted for with any plausibility unless we recognize a genuine freedom,- a freedom enabling the agent to select, if he chooses, the alternative occasioned by the "weaker" element in his character. Any true theory must account not only for the cases of accurate prediction,

but also for the marked failures.

IV. The Limits of Moral Responsibility

Man is to be held morally responsible for his free volitions and their consequences. There is of course no question but that, so long as there are real alternatives, we are responsible for our choices. But our responsibility cannot stop there,- we are likewise accountable for the consequences of our choices. This we may accept as an axiom of the moral consciousness. It means that we must take the responsibility for the effects upon our character resulting from our free volitions. Any strengthening or weakening of character resulting from the use of our freedom is chargeable to us. And when the individual, by a continuous expression of one characteristic, strengthens it and weakens its contrary to the point that the contrary no longer offers an alternative, he is responsible for the volitions determined by this element of his character in so far as its strength has been voluntarily built up. This is only to say that acts due indirectly to the use of the agent's freedom, as well as free volitions themselves, are to be considered as falling within the limits of his responsibility. But beyond these limits responsibility ceases.

A question will arise, however, in regard to characteristics inherited, or due to environmental influences. Obviously, according to definition, we are not responsible for them. Shall we say, then, that no moral quality attaches to them at all? The answer is that moral quality and moral

responsibility are not coterminous. Moral quality attaches to all the elements in our character and to all our volitions; moral responsibility, on the other hand, belongs only to our free volitions, our genuine choices, and their consequences. There may be good and bad elements in our character for which we are not responsible, but we cannot regard these characteristics as non-moral, so long as we retain the moral category at all. We cannot, for instance, regard an inherited tendency to evil as merely a pathological phenomenon, and thus as amoral.

In connection with the idea of responsibility, it should be pointed^{out}/that the merit or demerit of a free act is determined by its difficulty. The guilt of a sin is in inverse proportion to the temptation, and the virtue of a good act in direct proportion to the strength of the evil tendency overcome in the performance of it. No certain application of this fact can be made in theology. We have a right to believe that God deals with men in accordance with their light and their situations. If this is true, it may be plausibly argued that those, for instance, who never hear of the gospel, will be given a chance in the future life, or that their disability will in some other way be taken account of. Such conjectures, however, are highly speculative. One thing is certain, that, regardless of the amount of merit or demerit of any act, we are, within the range of responsibility, fully responsible.

V. Freedom and the World of Science

It may have been noticed that in the establishment of our view of human freedom no appeal has been made to the fact that a "principle of indeterminacy" is now held by some very influential thinkers to exist in the natural world. This omission has been deliberate, influenced by certain very definite reasons.

In the first place, it has been felt that the evidence given of the reality of contrary/choice on psychological, moral, and theological/grounds has been sufficient to establish the thesis we have been supporting. Not only so, but, in our own view, it is the only legitimate type of evidence we have. We cannot make unguarded inferences about the nature of the world of mind from the nature of the outside world. Nothing is more unwarranted, for instance, than the widespread tendency to regard scientific determinism as implying determinism all through the spiritual realm. This is not logic; it is mere assumption, and assumption taken in the face of the fact that, if there is a noumenal realm at all, it is vastly different from the phenomenal realm. By the same token, there is no justification for the conclusion, that indeterminacy in the natural realm implies the same in regard to human willing. To be sure, it might and does/establish a strong presumption in favor of such a conclusion, but presumption is not proof. W. P. Bridgman, in an article on the unpredictability of small scale phenomena, issues a timely warning: "Many will be tempted to see a connection between the question of the predictability of the behavior

of organic systems and the questions which have always exercised the human race, determinism and free will. It seems to me that there is no connection. The former is a question of physical fact, while the latter are primarily questions of a subjective character, which involve those emotional experiences which the subject goes through when on the point of making a decision."¹⁵ The only valid knowledge of a metaphysical reality like human volition will come from a study of the spiritual realm to which it belongs, not from a study of the natural world, the realities of which are essentially different. It might be added that religion and morality are in a position at once more dignified and impregnable, when they "stand on their own legs" and do not appeal to physical science in support of their views.

Even if we could legitimately infer the power of contrary choice from the fact of indeterminacy in the natural world, this would still be a most precarious support for our belief in human freedom, owing to the weight of opinion and evidence against the reality of such indeterminacy. It may be true, as Dampier-Whetham writes, that "Scientific determinism has broken down, and broken down in the very citadel of its power - the inner structure of the atom."¹⁶ But the same writer goes on to give the following caution: "It is possible that at some future time a new theory of mechanics may be developed, and individual molecules, atoms, and

¹⁵W.P.Bridgman, The Recent Change of Attitude Toward the Law of Cause and Effect, Article in Science, May 22, 1931.

¹⁶William Cecil Dampier Dampier-Whetham, A History of Science and its Relations with Philosophy and Religion, p. 476.

electrons become determinate. But as yet there is no sign of such a theory...The uncertainties hitherto described might possibly be due to ignorance, and might pass into determinism again as knowledge increased. It is dangerous to build on them a philosophy of free-will."¹⁷ Over against a postulate of a "principle of indeterminacy" such as Eddington seems to make, we have the extremely significant insistence of scientists like Einstein and Planck on the fact that science can never give up its postulate of universal necessity. To quote Planck: "Of course it may be said that the law of causality is only after all an hypothesis. If it be an hypothesis it is not an hypothesis like most of the others, but it is a fundamental hypothesis because it is the postulate which is necessary to give sense and meaning to the application of all hypotheses in scientific research."¹⁸ By "the law of causality" Planck means that law as science states it,- i.e., like cause like effect, and elsewhere he makes it abundantly clear that he believes in the law not merely as a regulative concept, or methodological procedure, but as expressing a causal nexus which is objectively real. The fact that the causal hypothesis is, as Planck states, not on the level with other scientific theories, but the very basis of its whole procedure, makes it more likely that it will be clung to, despite science's present ignorance of the causes behind the behavior of small scale phenomena, than

¹⁷W.C.D.Dampier-Whetham, op. cit., p. 473.

¹⁸Max Planck, Where Is Science Going? p. 150.

that it will be laid aside while that ignorance is made the basis of belief in a "principle of indeterminacy". Now it is on the assumption that/determinism must always reign supreme in the world of science that we have^{been}/proceeding in the development of our theory of volition. Whatever be the truth in the matter, the uncertainty of founding human freedom on scientific indeterminism should be obvious.

In this connection, however, a further question arises. While belief in human freedom cannot be based on a supposed principle of indeterminacy in nature, will not such a theory follow as a corollary of belief in freedom? The theory we have adopted implies a relation between the noumenal and phenomenal realms which will permit of free causes in the former producing effects in^{the} latter. The Kantian antithesis between the two realms is rejected. The phenomenal world is not held, as he conceived it, to be a closed system in which no event may take place not produced by some preceding event in the same realm. On the contrary the physical event expressive of a responsible moral choice must be traceable directly to that choice, which means that the antecedent physical process must be such that it does not determine whether the event will occur or not. This being true, it may appear that we have rejected scientific indeterminism as the basis of our belief in freedom only to assert it as the corollary.

This, however, is not the case. Indeterminism may mean two things, chance and spontaneous causation. Now the theory we have adopted does not assert the existence of

either of these in the natural world. It does not imply the existence of chance, because the physical events referred to free volitions do not come about without cause, but are caused by volitions. How they are produced we cannot say, but we are in the same predicament with regard to how any cause produces its effect. Again, the position adopted does^{not} attribute spontaneous causation to any physical event or cause. The events in question are the results of spontaneous causation, but this spontaneity exists, not within the world^{of} science, but in the noumenal realm. Physical events are not only held to be^{caused}, but produced by preceding causes, as science demands. We have not, therefore, contradicted the position that determinism must hold supreme in the scientific world.

It is, of course, true that our position implies the unpredictability of the physical consequents of free volitions, not only from the practical but also from the theoretical standpoint. Now in the case of any physical^{event} except one referable to a spontaneous non-physical^{cause}, an admission that it was even in theory unpredictable would be tantamount to asserting that it was not determined. Hence science in the name of its causal law claims the theoretical possibility of predicting all natural events. Now while this claim has to be relinquished in the case of those events expressive of free volitions, it does not involve any sacrifice of scientific principle, because the determined character of those events is not thereby denied. It is still possible for science to uphold its principle of transeunt caus-

ality throughout the natural realm. The indeterminism we assert belongs not to the realm of science, but to the volitions lying outside of it. If, on the ground of the universality of transeunt causation, the spontaneity of volitions is denied, it must be remembered that this cannot legitimately be done in the name of science. As far as science is concerned, the scientific form of the causal principle is limited to the natural world, and its extension beyond the confines of the natural realm is a philosophical assumption.

CHAPTER XIV

THE ORIGIN AND PROPAGATION OF SIN

We have up to this point undertaken to deal with the question of God's purposes and decrees in the world, and to develop a theory of human freedom. The task now confronts us of accounting, consistently with the positions we have assumed, for the appearance and spread of sin in the world.

I. The Origin of Sin

Let us turn first to the question of how sin came into the world. If we find ourselves compelled to reject the artificial conception of original righteousness and the traditional form of the fall doctrine, with all the fatal objections attaching to it, what account can be given of the origin of sin?

To begin with, there are two positions, now generally accepted, which we must recognize as presuppositions of any account of how sin came into the world. The first of these is that the first three chapters of Genesis are not to be taken as literal history in every detail, and in all probability were not meant to be so taken by their author or authors. That God created the heavens and the earth, that He revealed Himself and His holy will to man, that man on

his own responsibility disobeyed that will, and that there is in some sense a racial solidarity in sin and its consequences,- these are the salient truths in the first chapters of Genesis. To attempt to fix upon them an elaborate doctrine of original righteousness, original sin and guilt is, as we have already seen, as exegetically unsound as it is psychologically and ethically untenable. The second presupposition we must accept is the evolutionary account of the origin of man. That is to say, we must accept it in principle, - we must regard man's present condition as the result of a gradual development from humbler beginnings. The idea of such a development is in harmony both with the theistic hypothesis and with the first three chapters of Genesis, interpreted in a non-literalistic fashion. This point of view, it might be held, commits us neither to a single nor multiple origin of the race.

With these positions as a background, an account of the appearance of sin can be constructed which is in accordance with the findings of science, the facts of the ethical life, and with Scripture.

According to such thinkers as Pfleiderer and F. R. Tennant, there was a state at which man was a non-moral creature. At this stage, there being no consciousness of the moral law, man was purely a creature of impulse, directed in his conduct by the animal tendencies which held sway in him. These instincts, appetites, and impulses, belonging to man as God made him, it is held, were not, and are not in themselves evil. They were non-moral and indifferent. In fact

they were the primal drives in the individual enabling him to maintain life in the struggle for existence, and are the dynamic behind much of human progress. Their strength was thus developed through ages largely because they serve necessary and useful ends. While not in themselves evil, these tendencies, Ward points out, led to acts which were objectively evil, even in the pre-moral stage. The end of this pre-moral stage took place with man's dawning consciousness of the moral law.

This theory of a pre-moral stage in man is both scientifically and ethically tenable, but it is not demanded by either science or ethics. On the other hand, it is more in keeping with Scripture, and the general tenor of Christian thought, to regard man as having been, from the time he became man, a moral creature. And there is no scientific nor ethical objection to this view. Man can still be regarded as having come into being with highly developed natural tendencies, either directly created in him by God or inherited from pre-human ancestors. It is not essential to allow a period for their development after his creation. These tendencies, as on the theory of a pre-moral stage, can be regarded as having been in themselves non-moral, and as directing themselves unconditionally and without any limitation to the satisfaction of every impulse, however and whenever arising. Instead, however, of thinking of man's consciousness of the moral law as a delayed phenomenon, we can think of it as dawning when man became a human being, in fact as having a part, along with his rational nature, in

constituting his humanity. This view certainly does no violence to the facts of the moral life, nor can it be criticized in the name of evolution, for on any theory the appearance of the moral consciousness must be regarded as a special endowment on the part of God. Christian theism cannot accept a purely naturalistic account of the origin of moral distinctions. No matter how rudimentary it was in the beginning, man's awareness of the moral law cannot have been produced by the preceding evolutionary process, however long the process or gradual the apprehension of the law. The appearance of the moral law signaled the emergence of something new in the process, and required a special intervention of God to account for it. It follows then, that this divine act might, as far as the theory of evolution is concerned, have taken place as easily at the beginning of the human race as later on. While, therefore, we must regard both conceptions as tenable, the weight of Christian testimony should incline us to the view that man was moral from the first.

What may have been the nature of the act or acts enjoined or forbidden by the law as apprehended by man at the beginning cannot be said. To say that it appeared first as the prohibition against eating certain fruit is a too-literal reading of Genesis. Nor is there any unanimous testimony on this point by psychology or anthropology. On one point, however, Scripture and Christian thought are clear: when man apprehended the moral law, he apprehended what he felt to be the will of God. We cannot, of course, obtain from psychol-

ogists and anthropologists an undivided opinion in corroboration of this view. As far as the scientific study of primitive man can reveal, his morality was largely custom and taboo. This we are not concerned to deny. But it does not bring us to the bottom of the question. If we go a step further, and ask what custom is, we find that it is conduct which is not merely "customary", but "customary" because felt to be obligatory. How, then, does one line of conduct, rather than another, come to be felt obligatory before it has become customary? It cannot be because the consequences are found to be better, for this would simply prove one line of conduct more expedient, and the binding character of custom is more than a feeling of its expediency. It cannot either be due to social pressure, for this arises only after the conduct has become a matter of custom. We are therefore led to conclude that it is because one line of conduct, and not another, is adjudged to be the will of the divine power. It could not have been a judgment of the mere rightness of an act, for primitive man did not distinguish between abstract morality and the will of God. This distinction was not even drawn by the Hebrew prophets,- it is, relatively speaking, a modern distinction of the sophisticated mind. Custom, therefore, finds its origin in God's revelation of His will to man, nor does the fact that God's will, and even God Himself, may have been at first very imperfectly apprehended, alter the fundamental position we are here defending.

The moral law, as man conceived it, at least in many cases, placed a check on his natural impulses, thus giving

rise to a conflict between impulse and itself. Or, to speak more exactly, the conflict arose between the impulses and the newly evoked tendency to obey the law. For when man apprehended the law as moral, he apprehended it not merely as that which is in itself right but with a correlative inner tendency to follow it. There was, in addition to the moral judgment of the 'oughtness' of the law, a strong inner motive prompting to it. In other words, when God revealed the law to man, it excited his moral tendency, a tendency belonging to him as much as his natural impulses, and which gave rise to motives toward the right. The gift of this tendency to its expression, excited by the moral law, was the first motion of God's grace in aiding man to attain fellowship with Him. Strictly speaking, it was this "moral nature", or tendency to the right, within man, that came into conflict with his natural impulses, and not the law considered objectively. This nature, let us note, is as native to man as the natural impulses which oppose it, and its expression enhances its strength, as is the case with them. Nor does its transmission by heredity involve the doctrine of the transmission of acquired characteristics.

Along with the awareness of the moral law, and the correlative tendency to follow it, man was endowed with freedom. He came to possess from that time forth the power to choose between alternatives of right and wrong. Over and above the conflicting urges of the tendency to follow his natural appetite and the tendency to follow the good, he had the capacity to elect which tendency he would express in

action. Without this capacity to obey it,- implying the like capacity not to obey it,- the law would not have been a moral law. Its requirements, at least when man first became moral, did not extend beyond the sphere of his freedom. Man did not feel himself obligated to any action which was beyond his power.

He was, at this point, a fully moral creature. He possessed natural impulses conflicting with his desire to obey an objective law apprehended as right, and he had the freedom to follow the law or not as he chose. The natural impulses, while not in themselves evil, nevertheless in their conflict with the tendency to the right, gave rise to a temptation to sin.

In man, having reached this state, there were all the possibilities of sin and righteousness. It was a matter of his own free choice whether he would follow the moral law or the ~~solicitations~~ of natural impulses. The first sin consisted in his voluntary choice to follow his natural impulse in disregard of the law. This was not due to the fact that the natural impulse was stronger, although following it was the easier course. We have seen that natural impulses and the tendency to the good cannot be properly compared as to their respective strength in the manner that physical forces can be compared. The first sin is accounted for simply by virtue of the fact that, given the factors making man a moral creature, he deliberately chose to sin.

It has been argued by some who hold the theory of a pre-moral state in man that we cannot properly speak of a

first sin. The transition from the natural to the moral state is so gradual that it would be impossible, it is held, to fix exactly the boundary between action which is natural and morally indifferent, and that which is moral and involves responsibility. This view would not have been suggested except on the hypothesis of a pre-moral stage. But even on this theory it does not hold. It could not, of course, be said at exactly what point in the life of the race the boundary between the non-moral and the moral was passed. But nevertheless the boundary must have been there, no matter how slow man's moral evolution may have been, and it must have been crossed at some point. An act which, for the first time was apprehended as contrary to the dictate of conscience, and the will of the divine power, was committed. Certainly, its sinfulness may have been very faintly discerned, but it was none the less there.

Since we do not know exactly what action was commanded or prohibited by the moral law, we cannot say what the act was which constituted the first sin. We may be sure, however, that the first sin was different from what the traditional doctrine of original sin represents it to have been, in this particular, that instead of being the most, it was in some respects, the least heinous of sins. For it was committed when the moral consciousness was least developed, when the sense of rightness and wrongness was least clear, when their significance was least appreciated, and the tendency to the right least strong. It had back of it no moral experience to enhance man's sense of the heinousness

of sin, and to teach the consequences of sin. It was the expression of natural tendencies not in themselves wrong, in the formation of which no previous moral choices had played a part, and for which man was therefore entirely unresponsible. After the first sin, the heinousness of sin would gradually increase as the moral consciousness was heightened and the moral experience of the race extended. Further, in its consequences the first sin was infinitely less grave than it was represented as having been according to the traditional fall theory. It could not have plunged the whole race into depravity and guilt, and been the cause of all subsequent sin. Its effects were no different from the effects of any other sin. From the standpoint of the moral life, it derived its greatest seriousness from the fact that it was the first sin, the first movement from purity to corruption.

Again, the theory we have advocated represents the first sin as preceded, not by a state of moral and spiritual perfection and consummate fellowship with God, but by a state of moral innocence. There is a vast difference between these two states. Moral innocence, however, does not mean non-moral innocence, the innocence of the creature who is unaware of the distinction between right and wrong. It means, rather, the innocence of a person who is conscious of moral distinctions, but who has not yet yielded to temptation, and who enjoys fellowship with God to the degree that his moral/and intellectual development permit. Nevertheless, even at its best, such a state would still be far removed

from the moral and spiritual perfection attributed to Adam by the doctrine of original righteousness, a perfection which meant that his moral consciousness was not in a rudimentary, but a completely developed form, that his will was ruled by a perfectly holy disposition, and that his relationship with God was one of Christlike fellowship. Adam was, on this theory, a paragon of virtue and holiness, while according to the view here advanced, man possessed only the innocence of a babe in the moral life.

In view of what has just been said, we obviously cannot speak of the first sin as "the fall" in the traditional sense. As we have seen, there were some respects in which it was even less heinous than the sins which followed. And it was not a fall from a state of perfect holiness to a state of utter depravity, but only from a state of innocence to the state of guilt and moral weakening which follows from any sin. Its consequences, furthermore, were nothing like the supposed effects of the fall of Adam,- it did not plunge the whole race into depravity and guilt, nor cause its complete alienation from God.

Nevertheless the seriousness of the first sin must not be minimized. As the Bible suggests, and as we have stated above, whatever the particular act was which constituted the first sin, it was an act of conscious opposition to the will of God and to God's ideals for man. In this respect its gravity cannot be overemphasized. It meant a deliberate choice on man's part to abuse the freedom which God had given him. It meant that man, while enjoying an unimpaired harmony with God, and with the prospect of a fellowship of in-

creasing richness, elected to place above these spiritual treasures the base and selfish pleasures which lured him. The first sin was of unique seriousness because it marked, as no subsequent sin has done, the transition from a state of unbroken harmony with God to a state of alienation. Because of the fact that it was rebellion against God, and the first act in this rebellion, it may rightly be called a "fall", and will always stand as a matter of the most serious moment in the history of the race.

II. The Propagation of Sin

Since, as we have seen, we cannot refer the prevalence of sin to the first sin as its sole explanation, how then shall we account for the propagation of sin in the race? If our account of the origin of sin is valid, the answer to the question is not difficult. The conditions which gave rise to the first sin, namely, the conflicting tendencies in man and freedom to choose between them, also account for the universality of sin in the race. All men inherit the natural impulses which occasioned the first sin. Given this, with the capacity to give expression to those tendencies, and the prevalence of sin is easily understandable. Sin exists because man, tempted by his natural impulses, freely chooses to sin. Beyond this we do not need to go.

That this is a sufficient explanation it would seem hard to deny. But that to some minds the deterministic account will seem more satisfactory can also not be denied. The deterministic theory enables us to posit an efficient

cause for every sin, a cause from which but one effect is possible. On the other hand, to grant man real freedom is to assert that sin might not have been. Edwards' argument that the universality of sin implies an evil tendency in human nature which necessitates sinful volitions is undoubtedly impressive, as we have recognized. And when confronted by it we can only reply that we have given an explanation which also is perfectly adequate to account for the moral evil of the world. If the deterministic explanation seems easier to some minds, it must be remembered that determinism leads to other positions which are utterly untenable.

The strength of the temptation to sin has undoubtedly grown greater in the case of some individuals. We have seen that the expression in action of an aspect of our nature strengthens it. It follows that indulgence in sin in the lives of some has strengthened their natural impulses leading to sin. Further, their offspring, inheriting these strengthened natural tendencies, have started with greater handicaps than their parents. Thus, while in some members of the race the tendency to good may have been strengthened, in others the opposite effect has taken place. This hereditary tendency to sin is strong enough in some individuals to determine them to evil conduct. We shall discuss the question of the responsibility for this presently.

In addition to this strengthening of native impulses, and their transmission in strengthened form, there has been developed in the race a habitual inclination to rebel against the moral law as such. Pfleiderer felt that this began to

develop before man recognized the moral nature of the law. Whether this is the case or not, there is certainly in man a rooted antipathy to the requirements and restrictions of the law, a factor which lends added impetus to the natural impulses in their war against the right, and which is in itself evil.

It might be objected that this antipathy to law is an acquired characteristic, which could not be handed down from one generation to another, but which can be developed only in the individual through his experience of conflict with the law. Whether this objection can be sustained depends upon whether this spirit of opposition to the law is to be classed as an acquired characteristic, and whether such characteristics can be transmitted. This is a psychological problem, however, we shall not discuss, for the prevalence of sin can be accounted for without postulating either the existence or the transmission of this disposition. It is probably well to point out here that the account we have given of the propagation of sin does not involve the transmission of acquired characteristics, but only of those physical and psychological passions which are natural.

These native hereditary impulses, which are against the moral law, constitute largely the "evil disposition" with which man is born. The antipathy to the right as such is a relatively minor influence to sin. In the recognition of an hereditary tendency to evil we are at one with the determinist in his doctrine of original sin. We cannot go the length of asserting that this constitutes a "total de-

pravity" which determines all individuals to sin, but we can recognize that it constitutes a race-solidarity in respect to the propensity which gives rise to sin. To this extent the individual is, by virtue of being a member of the race, liable to sin. And we have recognized that in the case of some individuals certain evil conduct may, by virtue of their hereditary propensity, be unavoidable.

No complete account of the propagation of sin could fail to take note of the influence of the social environment upon the individual, a factor which was recognized by the Arminians and which has been reemphasized by Schleiermacher and Ritschl. The tendencies against the law in our nature are always affected by the environment. Environmental conditions favorable to their expression strengthen their influence in any particular case. The influence of the race's example in sinning upon the individual is of the greatest importance in accounting for the prevalence of sin. This is of course not an independent cause of sin, but one of the subordinate causes which has developed out of the fundamental conflict between our unbridled natural impulses and the moral law. It is another aspect of race-solidarity as to the conditions of sin. No member of the race escapes the impress of this social example on his moral nature. And in the case of some members the environment, in conjunction with their native tendency to sin, may be the major factor in determining certain evil actions.

III. God's Relation to Sin

In the light of the account we have given of the rise and propagation of sin we can deal with the question of God's relation to it. We have taken the position that He could be justified in permitting it, on the ground that its permission was necessary to the realization of His worthy purpose. Let us now examine more carefully what is involved in God's permission of sin.

To begin with, He makes sin possible by endowing man with freedom. Now we saw in connection with the question of freedom that it is conditioned by man's possession of a nature with opposing tendencies in it. Speaking in moral terms, the power of genuine choice between right and wrong must be conditioned by tendencies in man to the right and to the wrong. To say that God permits sin, then, involves the recognition that He endows man with tendencies which, in conflict with the tendency to the good, give rise to temptation, and become the occasion for sin. However, the natural impulses which occasion sin are not in themselves evil, but really non-moral,- they are evil only in relation to law. As we have seen, they are simply the impulses belonging to man on his animal side, and which are essential to the preservation and development of life. Allowed to express themselves for their proper purposes and in moderation they do not lead to sin. They are the morally indifferent raw materials of human nature, which condition wrongdoing only as moral man, in the exercise of his freedom, deliberately chooses to misuse that freedom and commit sin. As Tennant

has well put it: "The most clamorous passion which invites to sensual indulgence is just as little to be described as evil in itself as the sublime work of art which may goad a man to extravagance and debt. It is equally non-moral and indifferent. No natural impulse, then, is itself sinful, unless present through our volition, and therefore through our fault. It is the deliberate refusal to reject the impulse, the wilful surrender of the government of conduct to the non-moralised sensibility, in which evil takes its rise."¹ God is not responsible, it follows, for moral evil either in the form of an intrinsically evil disposition or of sinful acts. Let us bear in mind, too, that God is not responsible for all the full strength of the tendencies to evil in us. This inherited nature has been developed through the generations by man's choice of the wrong. Further, God indeed gave man the power to resist the influence of his temptations, and in the solicitations of conscience seeks to persuade him to the good. He has thus done all that He could do to prevent sin, consistently with His gift of freedom to man.

N.P. Williams, in The Ideas of the Fall and of Original Sin, one of the most recent works on this subject, criticizes the type of theory we have advanced on the ground that God might have created man with a conscience in full control of his natural impulses. If, as seems apparent, Williams meant He might have given man such control as to make it certain his natural impulses would be restrained, this would have been

¹F. R. Tennant, *The Origin and Propagation of Sin*, pp 101-2.

determinism, with all it involves. If, however, he means simply that God might have made full control possible, the reply is that He did. Man might have resisted the temptations of his native impulses. Hence God can be abundantly vindicated for endowing us with a nature which contains within itself the possibility of evil. It is, in fact, not nearly as difficult as to reconcile His holy nature with the existence of natural evil. The possibility of sin was essential to His great purpose of creating morally perfect beings. Seen in this light, we can reconcile it with God's character.

A further problem arises as to God's relation to those sins which may be determined by heredity or by environmental conditions, or both. That certain sinful acts may be ~~so~~ determined we have recognized. Now this might appear to be a case of sin for which God is responsible, since, as we have seen, the individual is not responsible for that which is beyond his power to control. (In view of this, it is probably more correct to speak of wrong acts determined by heredity or environment as being evil than as being sins, for the term sin usually implies responsibility.) We must admit that God is responsible for the laws of heredity and of influence by which the sins of the parent and of the race lead to moral evil in the offspring. But the responsibility for the evil in an individual which is necessitated by his heredity or environment lies with his progenitors or with the individuals composing his environment, whose sins are the real causes of his wrongdoing. The natural law by which the

child inherits its parents' weaknesses, or the individual is affected by his environment, is no different from the law by which the results of a volition are connected with the volition, or the law by which the character of a person is affected by his actions. Yet we do not hold God responsible for murder which was freely willed by the murderer, even though it was made possible only by the laws of nature connecting his volition with the death of the victim. So we cannot hold God responsible for the evil in a child which results directly from the sins of his parents, or of society. The evil in the child is only a part of the consequences of the sin of the parent and of society.

The laws of heredity and of social influence are themselves as non-moral as any other natural or psychological laws. They may be used for evil or for good. Just as our good volitions may, by virtue of the natural laws connecting them with their results, be used for good, so the laws of heredity and social influence may be used for good. In fact, they are indispensable to the propagation of righteousness in individuals and society, and are thus essential to God's purposes. If the moral level of the race is to be lifted, these laws must be utilized in so doing. God is not to be implicated in sin because His laws, owing to the sins of men for which He is not responsible, are made the instruments of evil.

This account of the origin and propagation of sin, while taking account of the facts to be explained, in particular the fact of race-solidarity with regard to sin and the

reconciliation of this with individual responsibility, is also consistent with the great religious values we have recognized as essential. In enabling us to see how sin took its rise without being referred to God as its author, it is in keeping with our demand for a morally perfect God. God is indeed responsible for the possibility of moral evil, in endowing man with his native impulses and the freedom to give them expression in contradiction to the moral law. But this we have seen to be compatible with His holy purpose. In freeing God from the authorship of sin we have likewise conserved another essential religious value, by ascribing to man a genuine freedom and real moral responsibility. While God is responsible for the possibility of sin, man is responsible for its actuality. As he is its free cause, sin is referable directly to him. That the solution we have offered of the coming of sin into the world and its spread is the simplest and most obvious should not prejudice the mind against it, however wary we should be of reaching our conclusions too easily. The true solution may often be that which occurs most readily to the man in the street.

CHAPTER XV

GRACE AND FAITH

We are now in a position to approach the question of the relationship between the divine, and the human will in the experience of conversion. What part is played by God, and what by man, when a sinner is reconciled to the Father?

We have^{seen}/reason for rejecting the view that the transformation from the wrong, to the right relationship with God is effected solely by divine grace. Our religious experience, which to say the least is not inconsistent at this point with Scripture, testifies to the fact that the human will plays more than a passive role when faith is born.

This, however, does not contradict the two fundamental Christian truths that (1) man is utterly unable to win his own salvation, and (2) the saving initiative is entirely with God. In our study of Edwards on original sin we recognized the fact that sin is universal. All men have sinned, and therefore all stand condemned in the eyes of God. Nothing that man is able to do can remove this condition which alienates him from God. As Emil Brunner says: "Man can do nothing to remove guilt. The personal relationship can be destroyed from the side of man, but it cannot be restored by

him. The man who has broken his relation to another, has brought in something between himself and that other which he can no more remove. If that is true between man and man, much more is it true between man and God. Once emancipated from the hand of God, we cannot restore communion with Him."¹ Even though a man might possess all the moral ability a Pelagius would assign him, and even though he might "improve" this to the extent of reforming and living in perfect accord with God's will, he could not thus remove the guilt of past sins. Nor could he in any wise obligate God to restore the broken fellowship with Him. This is a fact consistently overlooked by Edwards when he insists that the Arminians place man's salvation wholly in his own hands. But the truth is that man is far from possessing the moral ability which the Arminian ascribed to him. We all sin, and in the course of our sinning develop tendencies to sin which, in many cases, attain sufficient strength to become determining in our choices. Even within the sphere in which we possess the freedom of alternative choice, there are tendencies to sin so strong as to render our sinning a practical certainty. In short, we must grant that all men have sinned, and that, while theoretically possible, it is from the practical standpoint out of the question that an individual should ever arise who would turn completely from his sin and follow perfectly the will of God. We can thus insist with all the conviction of Paul that without grace man is lost.

¹ Emil Brunner, *The Word and the World*, pp 50-51.

It follows as a corollary of this that the saving initiative is with God. If man, who in himself is helpless to accomplish it, is to be brought back into fellowship with the Father, the first and chief move must be from God downward. This truth has been clearly expressed by Professor A. E. Taylor. "The initiative in the process of 'assimilation to God' must come from the side of the eternal; it must be God who first comes to meet us, and who, all through the moral life itself, 'works in us' in a sense which is more than metaphorical. Our moral endeavors must be genuinely ours, but they must be responses to intimate actual contacts in which a real God moves out to meet His creatures, and by the contact at once sustains and inspires the appropriate response on the creature's part." ² Let us now ask what is the nature of this divine activity.

I. The Grace of God

It was its connotation of active favor, says Professor Moffatt³, which made the term 'charis' so attractive to Paul. It signified to him not only God's favor but a favor which acted upon men and moved out in the life of His people. We cannot offer a better definition of grace than that which is contained in the two words "active favor".

The grace of God consists primarily in His self-revelation through Jesus Christ. This is the Pauline teach-

²A. E. Taylor, *The Faith of a Moralist*, Vol. I, p. 223.

³James Moffatt, *Grace in the New Testament*, p. 25.

ing, and indeed that of the New Testament as a whole. God in Christ, holding out the right hand of reconciliation to man, is grace in its supreme form. Yet it must not be limited to this special activity, but includes all that God does to further His purpose of fellowship with man. It includes man's creation as a moral being, with the gift of freedom to choose the right, and thus the capacity to respond to the gospel. It includes the inner tendency prompting him toward the right, a sense of 'oughtness' in the presence of the good, a tug toward the ideal. It includes, as a part of his freedom, the capacity for exercising faith. It includes the revelation of God in nature, in the lives of human beings, and through the voice of the prophets. Everything that is done to lift man toward Himself is a part of God's active favor. Nor must the weight attached to the revelation in Christ be allowed to minimize the significance of these other aspects of the divine favor, which are indeed prerequisite to the efficacy of Christ's soteriological work.

Having recognized these other gifts of grace, however, let us repeat the New Testament conviction that grace is supremely manifested in and through Christ. Here God most completely unveils His face, here His love is epitomized, here the forgiving spirit expresses itself to the sinner through the vicarious suffering produced by his sins, here the forbearing Father makes His greatest appeal to His wayward children. That God in Christ should give Himself for us,- this is grace in its consummate form.

And this gift is God's urging Himself upon us. Nothing

is so potent to convict of sin, nothing so moving in its appeal to the errant child, nothing so challenging to the highest in man as the cross of Christ. It is God's coming to us in this way that does most to bring the sinner to repentance and faith. This is the great persuasive, the dynamic influence, to which those who name His name ascribe their conversion to Christ.

It is not a forcing of our wills, it is not a contriving to have us "do as we please", in Edwards' sense: it is rather an appeal to us to yield in the exercise of God-given freedom. We have seen how a change in our environment may influence the appeal a certain contemplated act makes to us. When God in Christ breaks in upon the world, the environment of our life is radically altered. To set eyes upon Jesus is to have the heart strings tugged at by God in an entirely different way and with new force. God does not destroy the citadel of our freedom, but He does immensely strengthen the tendency to yield to Him. We are drawn by grace, but we follow in freedom.

The fact that we are free to exercise faith or not makes God's grace in sending Christ far more significant than it would otherwise be. On the determinists' view the gospel can have no effect on us. Its appeal is all for naught, for we are utterly incapable of responding to the appeal. So far as the sinner's turning to God is concerned, the coming of Christ into the picture makes no real difference. The sinner is not thereby influenced in any effective way. The gospel represents God's active favor, to be sure,

but it is no more than a demonstration of that love, for it cannot possibly change an individual. For this reason grace is fundamentally and almost exclusively, with the determinist, the efficacious action of God's Spirit upon man, in which he is led to accept the gospel. Only if a man is free can the gospel be what it was intended to be, the prime factor in wooing lost man back to God.

Now although we must deny an efficacious action of God's Spirit upon man, which determines his will, we do not thereby deny the work of His Spirit in man's heart. God does more than seek to influence man through the appeal of the gospel. He approaches him directly through the inward action of His Spirit. The sending of Christ is an objective act of grace, and operates upon man indirectly through an environmental change. On the other hand, the action of the Spirit upon the heart is immediate. This action begins with the moral life, when God places in man a tendency toward the values he apprehends, a movement in contradiction to the natural tendencies inconsistent with the good. This tendency, which is a movement of God's Spirit upon man, continues through his whole life. Regardless of what his moral conduct, or spiritual attitude may be, it never entirely leaves him.

This movement of the Spirit upon man is strikingly exhibited in the strengthening of the tendency toward higher values which follows any right choice. The fact of this strengthening is recognized, and that it requires something more than a physiological explanation fully to account for

it must also be admitted. Growth in the moral life is not merely an alteration in the brain; it is a change of character. The Christian expresses this in religious terms,- it is the increasing indwelling of the Spirit, it is progress in being possessed by Christ. The greatest strengthening comes when a free, unreserved surrender to Christ is made. Then moral and spiritual resources are made available in new abundance and richer quality, then the highest fellowship is enjoyed; and the relationship, if allowed to progress to its fullest, culminates in an experience which is perhaps adequately suggested only by the language of the mystic: "I live yet not I."

This strengthening of character as a result of the inward action of the Spirit does not destroy man's freedom. His nature is altered by the immediate influence of the Spirit, it is true, but this transformation takes place only when he freely yields himself to the good and thus wills that it take place. He does not lift himself by his own bootstraps, but he places himself in a position, by his own free choice, to be helped by God. It is like stepping into a lift,- we do so of our own volition and energy, but then, without further effort on our part, the lift carries us to a higher level. So, by the grace of God, in the form of a direct movement of His Spirit upon us, we are elevated to a higher moral level upon the occasion of a right choice. This gracious assistance places us in a position where further good choices are made easier, but they do not necessarily thereby become determined. Freedom in any particular instance

is lost only when, as a result of repeated right choices, the evil alternative disappears. And such is the desired consummation of the moral struggle.

We cannot draw a distinction between different forms of the divine grace comparable to that drawn by the determinist between common and efficacious grace, and this for several reasons. In the first place, there is no grace which is efficacious in the sense of operating arbitrarily in contravention of natural law, and thus no distinction on this ground is possible. In the second place, grace in no form is determining, - it is never the sole and sufficient cause of faith, although grace in all its forms plays a part in any conversion. Again, there is no limitation of special grace to a particular group of individuals entirely independent of their own conduct. Efficacious grace for the determinist is given only to the elect, but the gospel, the ministrations of the Spirit, the gift of freedom, etc., are for all. Grace can thus not be distinguished according to its supernatural character, its special efficacy, or its limited application, but only according to the various ways in which it expresses itself.

II. Faith.

God having taken the initiative in His gracious advances toward man, the latter responds in the act of faith. God offers the boon of salvation; man accepts it.

In the exercise of faith man is free. When he accepts the gospel, he makes a genuine choice, deliberate, and with-

out any constraint within or without, electing to place his trust in Christ. That this is a worthy and commendable act is not to be denied. It represents indeed the noblest act of which sinful man is capable: the acknowledgment and condemnation of his sins, the recognition of his ill desert, and the trusting appeal to Christ for forgiveness. Were faith not such an act, it would not be an appropriate response to the gospel.

On the other hand, faith is not a meritorious 'work' to which salvation is granted as a reward. It is the express repudiation of all merit, of all ground of boasting, of all claims against God, of all self-sufficiency. As W.A. Copinger well remarks, "If it be thought that here there is entrance for self-sufficiency, at least in the case of the man who turns to God, let it be remembered that the only mode of his righteous action is by self-renunciation and faith towards God, and this can leave but little room, if any, for self-righteousness."⁴ Faith is the humble acceptance of a gift, an acceptance which, by its very nature, testifies to the agent's inability to win, by his own strength or desert, the gift being freely given. As a free response to the gospel faith is itself an affirmation of the truth of salvation by grace.

Since it is not a work of merit, but the acceptance of a gift, it is impossible for the fact that faith is freely

⁴W. A. Copinger, A Treatise on Predestination, Election, and Grace, p. 299.

exercised to limit the sovereignty of God in the salvation of men. God is completely free in His election, i.e., in His determination to bestow salvation, and to bestow it upon those who respond to the gospel in faith. Nothing in man, either existing or foreseen, constrains or obligates Him in any way in this determination. Barth rightly says: "We count upon God's grace. But it is not our own! Everything depends upon that grace! But we do not bring it into being by any magic turn of our dialectic. He is, and he remains free: else he were not God."⁵ Although God foresaw those who would have faith, He foresaw their faith as a response to the gospel, and thus only as an acceptance of the gift He was sovereignly offering, not as an obligation upon Him to make the gift, or to make it to those particular individuals. The fact that faith is the condition of salvation, and that man is free to meet the condition, in no wise detracts from God's sovereignty in the bestowal of eternal life. For it is God who decides the condition and who freely determines to bestow His blessings in this way. To exercise faith is simply to receive salvation as a gift, and to receive it in the way God has chosen to give it.

It is appropriate here, before leaving the question of faith, to advert to the problem raised by the fact that faith may be impossible to certain individuals. We have seen, in connection with the idea of freedom, that the sphere in which there are real alternatives before an individual is

⁵Karl Barth, *The Word of God and the Word of Man*, p. 178.

determined by his character, and that the number of choices open to him is therefore limited. Now it may be that for some persons the acceptance of Christ is not an open choice, the possibility of this act being ruled out by an evil character. A problem is created by the existence of this possibility alongside our rejection of determining grace. Where the evil character which makes faith impossible is not due to the individual's abuse of his freedom, but to his heredity or environment, or both, we have apparently a case of unconditional reprobation as genuine as that of the determinist. Two things may be said in answer to the difficulty. First, we must remember that God deals with an individual on the basis of the latter's opportunity. We cannot conceive of a just God's damning a creature, who, through no fault of his own, is unable to accept Christ. Second, it is not inconsistent with Christian theology to suppose that, for such individuals, an opportunity may be given after this life to receive the gospel. To postulate this as an explicit part of Christian teaching is of course out of the question, but it is certainly within the spirit of that teaching. Whatever be our solution of the problem, the great fact on which the Christian can rest is the character of the loving Father. What we have said of those who lack ability will apply also to those who lack light, - i.e., to those who never hear the gospel.

In connection with this question of the possible existence of those who are unable to accept Christ, it may be argued that, by parity of reasoning, we may suppose that there

are some whose acceptance of Him is determined by factors beyond their own control. To endow these with salvation on the basis of a determined choice would seem as unjust as to deny it to others on the same basis. This, however, is an hypothetical problem. The existence of persons who cannot but receive the gospel is conceivable in theory, but it is not thinkable in actual fact. The act of faith, with all that it involves of self-condemnation, of purity of motive, and of high aspiration, is the noblest choice a man can make. To suppose it impossible for certain individuals to avoid this choice is to take far too exalted a view of sinful man. We have recognized the truth of the Pauline dictum that "all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God."⁶ While from time to time there arise some saintly individuals, it must be remembered that they are born of sinful parents, and dwell in evil surroundings, even when both heredity and environment are of the best. It is true that many evil deeds are impossible to the highest characters, but there are none so pure as to face no alternative to the noblest moral act which can engage the powers of man.

⁶Romans 3. 23.

CHAPTER XVI

THE PERSEVERANCE OF BELIEVERS

Let us now briefly consider the question of the Christian's perseverance in his faith. Edwards and his Calvinist associates were right in insisting that persevering faith is essential to salvation. This proposition need not be laborēd,- obviously, if a man loses his faith, he is no longer in the right relationship with God, no matter how vigorous his faith may have been at a previous time. Perseverance in faith of course does not necessarily imply a perfect faith, in which there are no falterings, but rather a conscious, continuing allegiance to Christ.

Now however essential it may be to his salvation, no man can be certain that he will persevere in his faith. To recognize his freedom to exercise faith or not is to admit the possibility of his defection. Perseverance is a matter of human choice, and whether or not faith will continue nothing can determine, and only God can foresee. Edwards was right in insisting that only determining grace can guarantee that a man will not fall away. And this is true however genuine his faith may be at first. The idea that there is a difference in the quality of the faith that perseveres and the faith that does not is purely imaginery. Undoubtedly

there is a difference in the depth and intensity of faith in different individuals, but the weaker faith may grow stronger and persevere, while the stronger may weaken and finally fail.

To deny the certainty of perseverance is neither to run counter to Scripture nor to turn a deaf ear to the demands of the religious consciousness. The belief in the final perseverance of the saints appealed to the reformers because it presumably enabled the believer to feel assured of salvation. But, as we have seen, this view gives him no more and no less assurance than the view we have advocated, and that for the reason that no man, however strongly he may believe in the doctrine of perseverance of true faith, can ever be certain that his is of that kind. Besides, the assurance desired by the Christian, and which Paul was most concerned to emphasize, is the assurance that God's saving grace is constant, that His love never falters, that He is always accessible to the appeal of faith.

The assertion that man can never be certain of his perseverance requires to be in a degree qualified. While it is true on the whole that faith is a matter of free choice and therefore subject to change, it is not impossible ~~but~~ that in certain instances it may be removed from the sphere of contrary choice. We have seen, in noting the reciprocal effect of character and conduct upon one another, that character may be developed in such a way that an act at one time a matter of free choice may become determined. By persistently following the good, and thus strengthening the tenden-

cies to the good, as we weaken those to the evil, we may progressively eliminate the alternatives to the good. In this way Christian faith may come to be a determined act, an habitual practice. There may be, and perhaps are, 'saints' of whom it is true that they are morally incapable of faltering in their faith. For this they deserve full credit, seeing that the inability results from the right use of their freedom. Even here, however, their perseverance is to an extent uncertain, for, as we have seen, acts at one time determined may become free. Some radical environmental change, or some deterioration of character, beginning in another department of the moral life, might eventually reopen the alternative to faith, and thus make defection possible. Only in the life to come, where we shall see Him 'face to face', can we be certain that the evil alternatives will finally disappear.

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¹All of Edwards' works listed here, with the exception of the last four, are included in the 2nd edition of the ten-volume set of his works, edited by Edward Williams and Edward Parsons, published in London, in 1817. This is the edition we have used in our study. The works are listed here in the order in which they appear in this edition. The chronological order is not exactly known.

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